

King, Queen make brief trip to Sinai

CAIRO (AP) — King Abdullah and Queen Rania met with President Hosni Mubarak briefly on Monday in Egypt's southern Red Sea resort of Sharm El-Sheikh, the Egyptian news agency reported. President Mubarak and his wife, Suzanne, had lunch with the Royal couple, the Middle East News Agency reported and then visited some tourist sites in the city.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية «الراي»

Journalist abducted in Chechnya

GROZNY (AFP) — A reporter with the Russian news agency ITAR-TASS was abducted from his home by gunmen in the breakaway republic of Chechnya, security sources said Monday. The journalist, Said Isayev, 35, was nabbed from his house on Sunday evening, said Turpal-Ali Atgiriye of the Chechen interior ministry. He has been working with ITAR-TASS since 1995. Chechnya has been awash with crime and kidnappings for ransom since it signed a 1996 truce ending a bloody 21-month war for independence from Russia that has left the republic's official status under dispute. Relations between Moscow and Grozny have grown even more tense after the abduction of a Russian general in the secessionist southern republic on March 5.

Volume 24 Number 7106

AMMAN TUESDAY, MARCH 30, 1999, DHUL HIJJA 13, 1419

Price: Jordan 200 Fils

Russia seeking talks as bombing escalates; refugees flee Kosovo and Yugoslavia says it is ready to talk

'Five Kosovo Albanian leaders 'executed'; 'F117 lost at weekend was shot down'

Agencies

RUSSIA PREPARED Monday to send its prime minister to try to end the Kosovo crisis, while NATO intensified attacks on Serb forces that the U.S. government says may be carrying out genocide against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo.

In neighbouring Albania, officials and aid workers struggled to cope with thousands of refugees streaming across its border. Alliance officials said there were reports that a leading ethnic Albanian leader had been executed by Serb forces in Kosovo, days after NATO began attacking Serb units allegedly forcing ethnic Albanians out of Kosovo.

Russia said it was sending Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov to Belgrade on Tuesday to seek "an immediate halt" to the bombing in the most high-level mediation effort since the NATO campaign began Wednesday.

As a longtime ally of Yugoslavia and cold war enemy of NATO, Russia has strongly condemned the NATO attacks. But it was unclear if even Russia could persuade Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to bow to

Western demands.

Yugoslavia said it is ready to hold talks on a peace accord for Kosovo and allow refugees to return if NATO ends its air campaign.

Belgrade is "completely open for continuing political dialogue," said.

Deputy Prime Minister Vuk Draskovic in an interview to Britain's Channel 4. But "we cannot talk under the bombs."

"NATO must stop bombing Serbia and supporting Albanian terrorists," he said, before adding that a peace accord for Kosovo could be achieved "within two days" of a resumption of negotiations.

The U.S. State Department said Monday "there are indications genocide is unfolding in Kosovo" as President Bill Clinton worked to maintain allied support for the broadening air offensive in Yugoslavia.

Spokesman James Rubin accused the Serbs of "abhorrent and criminal action on a maximum scale." He detailed executions of ethnic Albanian school teachers, a negotiator, an editor and hundreds of unarmed civilians.

On Monday, the Serbs gave no signs of capitulating. After a night of NATO bombing of

Pristina, the Kosovo capital, and other targets including a Yugoslav combat force, government and military officials repeated accusations that the bombing violated international law and targeted unarmed civilians. "Our country must be defended to the last man and the last available piece of arsenal," said Col. Gen. Spaseje Smiljanic, head of the air force and air defence. He said the attacks had caused \$300 million worth of damage and seven air force personnel were killed and 17 injured.

In Brussels, NATO spokesman air commodore David Wilby said the overnight attacks into Monday morning went after Serb and Yugoslav units involved in atrocities, such as the 243rd combat group at Donjan Sennja.

He also said NATO received reports that Fehmi Agani, an ethnic Albanian negotiator at recent peace talks in France, was executed on Sunday and that others had gone into hiding.

However, a U.S. Air force major said on Monday that a Stealth F-117 bomber which went down during NATO raids in Yugoslavia on Saturday was

shot down.

"I don't think [Yugoslav] resistance has been light. After all, they shot down an F-117,"

Tim, who heads a 16-strong crew on an EC-130E communications plane, told Reuters at NATO's Aviano air base in northeastern Italy.

The 43-year-old from Connecticut, whose official title is Director of Airborne Battle Staff, was not allowed to give his full name.

NATO has said the cause of Saturday crash was not known.

The Yugoslav military has said it shot down the aircraft, which crashed at the village of Budjanovci, 50 km west of Belgrade.

It was the first F-117 Nighthawk to go down in combat.

Dave, a 30-year-old EC-130E pilot from Pennsylvania, said the Yugoslavs had put up "pretty constant resistance" during five nights of NATO bombardments.

The EC-130Es cruise high above their fighter jets, acting as mobile control centres.

Serb reprisals against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo have reportedly escalated, since NATO launched its air attacks.

The goal of the air operation is to degrade Milosevic's ability to crack down on the ethnic Albanians, who have been fighting for independence from Serbia, the main republic of Yugoslavia.

Since the attacks began, about 60,000 Kosovo Albanian refugees have arrived in northern Albania, the U.N. relief agency said Monday. The influx strained the already desperate resources of one of Europe's poorest countries.

In Kukles, a regional centre, townspeople have housed about 5,000 refugees and an equal number are staying in empty warehouses. But most spent Sunday night sleeping in doorways, on truck beds or anywhere they could stretch plastic sheeting provided by the UNHCR.

Thousands more refugees headed to Macedonia to the southeast and Montenegro to the west.

"Are you American?" Nejmi Kelmendi, 50, asked when she and her daughters encountered an Associated Press photographer while trudging up a mountain road near Pec in southwestern Kosovo, toward Montenegro.

"Tell NATO that Pec is burning, and where are the ground troops?"



Ethnic Albanian refugees from the Kosovar village of Kacanik arrive Monday on a tractor in the Macedonian village of Blace, 20 kilometres north of Skopje, the capital of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (AFP photo)

Albania's president also wants NATO troops to flood Kosovo, but NATO and Western officials say only the air campaign will continue for

now. "If you think back to the Gulf War, there were seven weeks of airstrikes before ground troops were committed," said British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook. "So even if it was the objective

to commit ground troops, we would first of all have begun by attacking air defence systems, then would have moved on, as we are now doing, to attacking his military assets on the ground."

Netanyahu orders three Palestinian offices in east Jerusalem closed

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Stepping up the battle over Jerusalem, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered three Palestinian National Authority (PNA) offices closed in the disputed city Monday, including that of the official Palestinian news agency.

Netanyahu said he would also take legal measures against Palestinian officials who continue to use the PLO headquarters in Jerusalem, the Orient House, as a de facto foreign ministry.

"We can't tolerate such infringements on our sovereignty in Jerusalem," Netanyahu said at his office just before meeting with a delegation of U.S. congressmen.

Netanyahu said his government had given the order to shut down three PNA offices in traditionally Arab east Jerusalem: the Wafa news agency, a Christian Affairs Office, and a prisoner advocacy group.

Jerusalem police spokesman Shmuel Ben-Ruby said the offices had not yet been closed, nor had the employees been notified. The prime minister did not detail what specific legal actions would be taken against the Palestinian officials working out of Orient House.

The Palestinians want to establish a capital in Arab east Jerusalem, the sector Israel occupied in the 1967 Mideast

war. With national elections less than two months away, Netanyahu has made preserving Israeli rule over all Jerusalem a hallmark of his reelection campaign.

Saeb Erekat, the Palestinian's senior negotiator in peace talks with Israel, dismissed Netanyahu's actions as a political ploy.

"Not only did he freeze the Wye [peace] agreement [and] is expanding settlements, but now he is conducting an electoral campaign in Jerusalem," Erekat said.

According to Erekat, the offices ordered closed predate the existence of the PNA and have been operating in the city for years.

House international relations committee chairman Ben Gilman, a Republican from New York who was leading a congressional delegation to Israel, on Monday reiterated the stance of American lawmakers who voted for a resolution saying that unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state is unacceptable.

Gilman also said that Congress' resolve to move the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem remained firm, although no date has been set. Nearly all foreign embassies are located in Tel Aviv, in deference to Jerusalem's disputed status.

Israel releases 14 Palestinian prisoners

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel released 14 Palestinians from Israeli jails on Monday, and a senior official said more were to be released before the Jewish Passover holiday.

The released are "security prisoners" whose freedom has been demanded by the Palestinians as part of the U.S.-brokered Wye River accords, said David Bar-Ilan, a senior advisor to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Riots broke out among Palestinians in November after Israel released 250 prisoners according to the accords.

Most of those released were common criminals. At the time, Netanyahu said he would never release prisoners with "blood on their hands" or who belonged to Islamist militant groups. He froze Wye because citing Palestinian violence.

In recent negotiations, none of the released prisoners belong to either category, Bar-Ilan said. An Israeli prisons authority statement said that two were released from jails run by the PNA and 12 were released from prisons run by the Israeli army.

Bar-Ilan said that the number of released prisoners would reach over 20 by Wednesday, when Passover begins.

Prior to the announcement of the release, Netanyahu said the release was to mark 'Eid Al Adha.

"We would be prepared as a gesture we make for the Muslim holidays to release Palestinian prisoners without blood on their hands," he said.

There are about 2,000 Palestinians in Israeli jails who are "security prisoners" — accused of anti-Israel activity.

In recent negotiations, Israel and Palestinians have isolated about 1,200 that are acceptable for release, belonging to neither of Netanyahu's banned categories, although no date has been set for their release.

The Passover releases are a goodwill gesture to the Palestinians for foiling a bombing attack by the Islamist militant group Hamas earlier this month, said an Israeli official speaking on condition of anonymity.

Hisham Abdel Razek, head of the Palestinian prisoners committee, said that the PNA knew nothing of the planned releases, and that the goodwill-gesture was no more than an electoral stunt by Netanyahu.

"I don't understand why it has to be a goodwill-gesture, when Netanyahu and his government know very well that there is an agreement on prisoners and it has to be implemented," Abdel Razek said.

Netanyahu faces elections May 17. His campaign is heading off hard-liners to his right by pledging that he will stand tough against Palestinian demands — but a gesture to the peace process would help win away votes from moderate opposition candidates.

Hatem Abdel Kader, a Palestinian negotiator, said Israel withdrew from recent negotiations over the release of 100 prisoners. He said the Israelis insisted on releasing only common criminals.

"We have no interest in them, and we did not negotiate over them," said Abdel Kader.

Hatem said he was "happy" to hear of the release on Monday of 14 prisoners, but said he had yet to confirm that those released were security prisoners.

Lawmakers accuse Netanyahu of taking bribes

TEL AVIV (AP) — Two lawmakers have asked police to open a criminal investigation against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu based on a published report that he solicited financial favours from a right-wing Australian billionaire.

In the request made on Sunday, the legislators accused Netanyahu of soliciting and receiving hundreds of thousands of dollars from Joseph Gutnick, a prominent member of the ultra-Orthodox Chabad movement and a vocal opponent of land-for-security deals with the Palestinians.

Yossi Sarid and Ran Cohen of the opposition Meretz Party cited a report in the Israeli daily Yediot Ahronot that said

Netanyahu "made sure that Gutnick's faction in the Chabad movement received a huge budget, political influence and access to power points that determine Israel's foreign policy" in exchange for the gifts to Netanyahu's family friends.

Their request also said Netanyahu helped appoint Gutnick to a powerful committee on restoring Holocaust-era property.

Sarid and Cohen allege that Gutnick bought out an ailing business owned by a nanny once employed by Netanyahu; donated money to a research project partly run by Netanyahu's father and a newspaper run by Netanyahu's chief-of-staff; and bought pro-Netanyahu

advertisements in U.S. newspapers at the request of top Netanyahu aide David Bar-Ilan.

Yediot Ahronot quoted Gutnick as confirming some of the gifts. Bar-Ilan called the charges "outrageous," saying he only recommended that Gutnick support the Zionist Organisation of America, a small U.S. Jewish organisation that has backed many of Netanyahu's policies.

"He [Gutnick] asked me if I could recommend an organisation he could support," Bar-Ilan said, adding that he was not speaking for the prime minister.

Netanyahu has dismissed the accusations as attempts by "an army of journalists" to discredit him and has said the money was given to charitable organisations. Sarid said on Monday that Gutnick's investments constituted a dangerous attempt by a foreign citizen to buy the elections.

"To buy kiosks for the children's nanny?" Sarid told the Associated Press. "That belongs to politics, not charity."

Police will not investigate the charges without approval from the attorney general, said police spokesman Ofer Sivan.

The justice ministry would not immediately say whether it would recommend an investigation.

Accusations of misconduct from across the political spectrum have increased as May 17 elections draw near.

Iraq says British proposals at U.N. 'malicious'

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq said on Monday that British proposals to upgrade the U.N. humanitarian programme in the country were a "suspicious and malicious" attempt to maintain U.N. economic sanctions endlessly.

British Ambassador to the United Nations Sir Jeremy Greenstock proposed last week that Baghdad should bring its illegal oil exports under U.N. control and be allowed to delay payments to a Gulf War reparations fund.

He presented the proposals to panels created by the Security Council to draw up a unified Iraq policy after U.S.-British air strikes last December to punish Baghdad for alleged non-compliance with U.N. weapons inspections.

"It is clear that the unofficial British paper aims at

imposing a complete tutelage on Iraq...and holding its people hostage to the unjust embargo forever," an information ministry spokesman told the Iraqi news agency.

"All that is missing from this paper is to nominate Britain as the guardian of the Iraqi people," The British proposal differs sharply from those advocated by France and Russia, who want Iraq to be able to import goods freely, except those related to weapons.

Greenstock also proposed new approaches to Iraqi disarmament but also insisted the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM), in charge of dismantling its weapons of mass destruction, be kept in place.

In contrast, Russia, France and China want UNSCOM to be abolished and replaced by a new

group. "This British movement is suspicious and malicious because the Security Council is still waiting for the presentations of the three panels it formed on Iraq," the Iraqi spokesman said.

The Security Council has set up three panels in an effort to achieve unanimity on its Iraq policy, deadlocked for months. One panel is on disarmament, a second on the humanitarian situation and the third on the fate of Kuwaiti and other prisoners and property seized by Iraq after its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The spokesman reiterated Baghdad's position on the panels, saying Iraq was not concerned with their work and doubted that they would reach positive results.

The British suggestions include regulating Iraq's

illegal oil trade with Turkey, estimated at \$400 million a year, and bringing it within the U.N. programme.

Iraq is allowed to sell oil worth up to \$5.26 billion every six months. Two-thirds of the revenues are used to buy food, medicine and other necessities, while the rest goes to a compensation fund and pays U.N. expenses.

But Iraq is not able to sell its full quota of oil because of low oil prices and the poor state of its oil industry.

U.N. officials estimate revenues from the current fifth phase of the oil-for-food programme will reach just over \$3 billion. The shortfall of funds is expected to hamper humanitarian work, they said.

Ex-Israeli major convicted in murder of British tourist

BEERSHEBA (AFP) — A former officer in a notorious Israeli army unit was found guilty Monday of the 1997 murder of a British tourist in southern Israel.

The court convicted Daniel Okev, 46, of shooting and killing Jeffrey "Max" Hunter, 22, and wounding Hunter's companion Charlotte Gibb, 20, after he picked the couple up hitchhiking near the Red Sea resort of Eilat.

Citing expert testimony that Okev had been psychologically damaged by his work in an army unit that assassinated Palestinians in the Gaza Strip in the 1970s, the court said mitigating circumstances would be taken into account in sentencing the defendant.

The sentencing hearing was scheduled to begin on April 12, court officials said. During his trial, which began a year ago, Okev said he had no memory of shooting Hunter and Gibb and came to his senses only when he found himself holding his gun over their bodies.

"It may be another Danny Okev inside of me. I don't know what happened," he said.

Psychiatrists who examined Okev submitted a report to the court saying he suffered from a form of dementia that leads individuals to occasionally act like automatons, unaware of their surroundings.

The psychiatrists said that after Okev and the couple stopped at the rest stop, the Israeli saw his pistol under the driver's seat of the car and went into a killing trance.

"As soon as the gun under the seat came into his field of vision, an action occurred that was apparently not under the control or judgement of the examinee," the report said. Okev's lawyer said his client suffered from severe trauma resulting from serving for several years in the special army unit which eliminated suspected Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip in the 1970s.



Daniel Okev, 46, is handcuffed by a policeman Monday, after he was convicted by an Israeli court sitting in Beersheva of the 1997 murder of a British tourist and wounding his girlfriend (AFP photo)

Israeli police accuse Hanegbi of evading bribe probe ahead of polls

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli police accused Justice Minister Tzahi Hanegbi on Monday of trying to delay an investigation into bribery allegations against him until after general elections in May.

In a rare public assault on the country's chief law enforcement official, police said Hanegbi was not cooperating with the investigation into charges he received money and favours from a lobbying group backed by fuel companies between 1994 and 1996.

Hanegbi is one of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's closest associates and is managing the ruling right-wing Likud Party's campaign for the

May 17 elections.

Police have been trying for weeks to question Hanegbi over the allegations and protested after his lawyer informed them the minister would only be available for interrogation a few brief times ahead of the elections.

"Unfortunately, this time-frame which was reached unilaterally is not acceptable to us and will not allow us to finish the investigation before the elections as planned," the police said in a statement Monday.

Hanegbi has already been interrogated several times by police over the affair, but investigators say they need to ask more questions after discovering inconsistencies

in earlier testimony.

The charges relate to Hanegbi's term as chairman of the parliamentary economic affairs committee between 1994 and 1996.

During the same period he received a salary and use of an official car from a road safety lobbying group which was later found to be financed by three fuel companies involved with legislation before Hanegbi's committee.

Hanegbi is also suspected of accepting illegal donations from the three companies to help finance his 1996 campaign for reelection to the Knesset.

If the charges are substantiated, Hanegbi could be indicted for accepting

bribes and breach of trust — a move which could prove damaging for the Likud election campaign if taken prior to the May 17 polls.

Hanegbi on Monday denied any wrongdoing and implicitly accused the police of trying to harm him ahead of the elections.

"I have been interrogated 19 times for more than 100 hours and suddenly police announce that they want to accelerate the investigation because of the elections," Hanegbi said on Israel Radio.

"I have agreed to appear for another 30 hours (of questioning) and that is not enough for them, it seems strange and unprecedented," he said.

Eritrea attacks Ethiopian troops on two fronts — Addis Ababa

Eritrea denies loss of 45,000 men

ADDIS ABABA (AFP) — Eritrean forces on Monday launched attacks against Ethiopian positions on the Western and central fronts in the Horn of Africa border war, Ethiopia's government spokeswoman said.

"The Eritrean army launched two counter-offensives on the Mereb River and both were repelled," Salome Tadesse said, while "on the Zala Anbesa-Egala front, there was unusually heavy artillery shelling from the Eritrean side."

Ethiopian civilian casualties were incurred in the Zala Anbesa-Egala region on the central front, she added. "Fighting continues," Tadesse told AFP in Addis Ababa.

No independent reports or details were available of fighting between the Horn of Africa neighbours, which began in May last year over disputed border territory and erupted again in February after a seven-month lull.

Throughout last week, Addis Ababa reported battles on the western front near the Mereb River and close to Shembeko, without saying how heavy it was.

On Sunday, Ethiopia claimed that more than 45,000 Eritrean soldiers had been killed, wounded or taken prisoner on the two fronts since the end of February, but this was denied by the Asmara government on Monday.

An Ethiopian government statement had said that "more than 45,000 enemy troops have been killed, wounded or captured," while "77 tanks have been destroyed and 19 tanks have been captured."

However, an Eritrean government official declared in response that "These figures are completely forged," according to Eritrea's ERINA news agency in a despatch received in Nairobi on Monday.

The Asmara government said that Ethiopia could make such claims "without having to worry about proving anything," since there was no independent access to battle zones on border territory fought over since May last year.

The statement pointed out that "the entire Tigray region (is) off limits to journalists and independent media" and charged that the Ethiopian claim was a response to "international verification of the massive losses" Addis Ababa's army had sustained in "recent fighting."

The war concerns disputed land on the border between Ethiopia's Tigray region and Eritrea, which was an Ethiopian province on the Red Sea before mainly Tigrayan and Eritrean rebels ousted dictator Lieutenant-Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam in May 1991.

The new Addis Ababa government of Meles Zenawi, who is today

prime minister, saw Eritrea become effectively independent, and this status was officially recognised by the international community in May 1993.

The artillery and infantry fighting and air raids which erupted last year followed a gradual deterioration of ties. Conflict broke out anew after a seven-month lull and diplomatic bids to resolve the conflict.

In February, Ethiopia seized back Badme, a town taken by Eritrea at the outset of the war, in what was seen as a major symbolic counter-offensive. Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki then informed the U.N. Security Council that he would accept an Organ-

isation of African Unity (OAU) peace plan already agreed to by Addis Ababa.

However, fighting has since continued, alongside a propaganda war, amid disagreements over the interpretation of the OAU proposal.

In mid-March, Asmara claimed to have killed 10,000 Ethiopian soldiers on the central front, but this was denied by Addis Ababa.

A main source of contention in the OAU plan is the withdrawal of troops by both sides to pre-war positions and what this would mean on the ground. The scheme also provides for the deployment of peacekeepers and the independent delineation of the frontier.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Ocalan to see relatives for the first time in 21 years

ISTANBUL (AFP) — More than 20 years after going underground to lead an armed campaign for Kurdish autonomy, rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan is to be reunited with his brothers and sisters on Friday, the Sabah daily reported Monday. Sabah said Turkish authorities had granted permission to three of Ocalan's brothers and sisters and two other relatives to visit him on the prison island of Imrali, where he is awaiting trial on treason charges.

Turkish, Syrian relatives meet on border

TURKEY (R) — Thousands of Turkish and Syrian Arabs celebrated a Muslim festival together on Monday for the first time in 10 years amid an easing of tension between Turkey and neighbouring Syria. Witnesses at the border between the two countries said families from both sides hugged and exchanged presents with relatives in an area set aside by Turkish authorities.

83 Sudanese troops killed — rebels

CAIRO (AFP) — Sudanese rebels said Monday they killed 83 government troops, including nine officers, during weekend fighting in southern Sudan and warned foreign oil companies to leave the region. The Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) said in a statement sent to Cairo that its fighters wounded another 200 troops, including six officers, during fighting Friday and Saturday in Ulu in the southern Blue Nile State. There was no immediate independent confirmation of the report.

No televising of Lockerbie trial

EDINBURGH (AFP) — Television cameras will not be allowed to broadcast the trial of the two Libyan suspects in the 1989 Lockerbie bombing, Scottish officials said Monday. The Scottish office said this was because Scottish law procedures would still apply despite the trial taking place in the Netherlands. "Cameras aren't allowed in trials in Scotland so the Lockerbie trial isn't any different," said a spokesman.

Two killed in furniture factory blaze

MANAMA (AP) — Two people were killed in a fire at a furniture factory and warehouse, which spread and gutted a nearby paper factory, a newspaper reported Monday. The cause of the fire was not immediately known. The Gulf Daily News said the fire started late Sunday at the Gulf Antiques factory, which specialised in making antique style furniture.

Indyk warns south Lebanon is volatile

CAIRO (AFP) — A senior U.S. official warned Monday that south Lebanon remains volatile after an Israeli general was killed in a bomb blast there a month ago and called for all sides to show restraint.

U.S. Middle East envoy Martin Indyk said in remarks to Arabic newspaper Al Hayat that the Israeli as well as Lebanese and Syrian governments, which back Hizbollah guerrillas, feel it is in their interest to exercise restraint.

But he told the newspaper, which is published in London and distributed throughout the Middle East, that the "situation could explode tomorrow."

The spark could come from a Hizbollah bomb which kills an Israeli soldier or civilian, he said. "It's a very delicate situation."

Brigadier General Erez Gerstein was killed by a roadside bomb planted by the Shiite Muslim Hizbollah in Israeli-occupied south Lebanon on Feb. 28. Gerstein, the most senior officer killed in south Lebanon in 16 years, was slain along with two other soldiers and a radio reporter.

The attack triggered a wave of Israeli retaliatory strikes. Meanwhile, Indyk

pledged the United States would not interfere in the Israeli elections in May, saying one side or the other would be happy to try to draw it in.

"Israel is an active democracy where it is not appropriate for foreign parties to intervene in the elections," Al Hayat quoted him as saying.

The United States sponsored a peace conference in Egypt's Red Sea resort of Sharm Al Sheikh in 1996 to support the Labour government of Prime Minister Shimon Peres, an architect of the Oslo accords for Palestinian autonomy.

But his right-wing Likud opponent, Benjamin Netanyahu, won the elections that followed.

Indyk also said Europe and the United States had long-standing differences over the Middle East peace process, but that his government had assumed more responsibility toward it and was more concerned by the outcome.

The United States refuses to take a stand for a Palestinian state, for example, saying that the status of the Palestinians must be settled in negotiations.

The U.S. State Department on Friday criticised the European Union summit decision in support of a Palestinian state.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

19:00Le Journal
19:15Eating and Health
19:30News headlines
19:35Thalassa
20:30Piolands
21:15Beyond 2000
22:00News in English
22:30Mozart/French

PRAYER TIMES

04:05Fajr
05:23(Sunrise) Duha
11:40Dhuhr
15:11Asr
17:57Maghreb
19:15Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweilieh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 462366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624853/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4771751
Amman International Church
Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 5688104
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 5811295

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweilieh Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 4771331
The American Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Warm weather conditions will prevail. Clouds will appear at different altitudes and winds southerly moderate to active. In Agaba, it will be warm, dusty. Winds southerly moderate to active and seas choppy.

Amman13/27
Agaba21/31

Deserts11/29
Jordan Valley18/31

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 26, Agaba 30. Humidity readings: Amman 26 per cent, Agaba 27 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun11/25
Jerash17/27
Um Qays15/26
Madaba16/28
Petra16/29
Dead Sea13/33

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Youssef Al Faqih4390104
Dr. Muthales Hlnash5519220
Dr. Mohammad Lobadeh5167914
Dr. Fadel Al Khatib5865456

AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy5537004
Raka Al Dewa Pharmacy 5536169

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Fou'ad Pharmacy (02)275360
ZARQA:
Dr. Isma'il Tallawi(05)903469
Palestine Pharmacy(05)983562

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Ajloun11/25
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Petra16/29
Dead Sea13/33

AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy5537004
Raka Al Dewa Pharmacy 5536169

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Queen Alia Intl. Airport44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery5921199
The Islamic, Abdali5666131/7
Husseini Medical Centre 5856856
Luzmila4630195
Khalidi Maternity4644281/6
Aklieh Maternity4642412
Jabal Amman Maternity4642362
Mafhas, J. Amman4636140
Palestine, Surcisani5607071
Shmeisani Hospital5607431
Jordan Hospital5607550
University Hospital5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muasher4777101/3
Al-Bashir4775111/26
Army, Marka4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital5157100
Amal Hospital5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre 5353000
Jerusalem Hospital4387181

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (05)983323
Zarqa National Hospital. (05)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital(05)986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital(05)990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555

Roman Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital(02)7101372, (02)7103101
Rosary Sisters Hospital(02)7102831, (02)7102011
Specialty Hospital(02)7103100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)204011

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44 (52700). Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4573201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:00Damascus (RJ)
08:05Agaba (RJ)
09:45Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
09:50Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
09:50Tehran, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
16:05Cairo (RJ)
16:05Sharm Al Sheikh (add) (RJ)

18:05Chicago, Shannon (RJ)
18:10London, Frankfurt (RJ)
19:15Larnaca (add) (RJ)
21:00Sharm Al Sheikh (add) (RJ)
22:30Sharm Al Sheikh (add) (RJ)
23:15Beirut (RJ)
00:05Hurghada (add) (RJ)
01:20Madrid (RJ)
01:50Sharm Al Sheikh (add) (RJ)

Other Flights

14:35Istanbul (TK)
18:00Dubai, Damascus (EK)
18:40Beirut (ME)
19:05Paris (AF)
20:05Tel Aviv (LY)
20:40Cairo (MS)
22:30London, Damascus (BA)
23:35Amsterdam (KL)
23:55Larnaca (CY)
00:55Bucharest (RO)
02:00Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

07:25 Agaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
08:50 Agaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
18:00 Agaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
18:45 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
05:30Agaba (RJ)

07:50Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:10Vienna, Frankfurt (RJ)
11:45Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
12:00Paris (RJ)
12:15Cairo (RJ)
12:55Berlin, Brussels (RJ)
13:00Sharm Al Sheikh (add) (RJ)
13:05London (RJ)
16:00Larnaca (add) (RJ)
17:55Sharm Al Sheikh (add) (RJ)
18:00Cairo (add) (RJ)
19:30Sharm Al Sheikh (add) (RJ)
19:35Beirut (RJ)
20:20Jeddah (RJ)
21:00Hurghada (add) (RJ)
22:45Sharm Al Sheikh (add) (RJ)
00:00Damascus (RJ)
00:00Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
01:15Jeddah (RJ)

Other Flights

07:10Frankfurt (LH)
15:35Istanbul (TK)
19:00Dubai (EK)
20:00Beirut (ME)
20:50Tel Aviv (LY)
21:40Cairo (MS)
00:35Amsterdam (KL)
01:55Bucharest (RO)
03:00Rome (AZ)
07:25London, Damascus (BA)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

05:00 Agaba (from QAIA) (RW)
08:30 Agaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
16:30 Tel Aviv (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:30 Agaba (from QAIA) (RW)

Jordanians celebrate 'Eid Al Adha, but breeders find dismal sheep business



By Dana Charkasi and Rana Awwad

AMMAN — Scores of Jordanians slaughtered sheep, cows and camels to mark Saturday's start of 'Eid Al Adha, or feast of the sacrifice, as tens of thousands of pilgrims were completing the last rituals of the annual Hajj in Mecca and Medina.

Many Jordanians flocked to dozens of tents that sprung up across the Kingdom to buy sheep and goats to slaughter for meat, a third of which they consume. The rest they give to relatives and the poor in line with Islamic law (Shari'a).

Al Adha has its roots in the historic story of Prophet Ibrahim, whom God ordered to sacrifice his son Isma'il to prove his full obedience. But when God saw his willingness, he sent a ram to be sacrificed in place of Isma'il. Since then, the "sacrifice" has become a religious ritual observed by pilgrims during their visit to the Holy cities of Mecca and Medina and by every Muslim who can afford to buy an animal.

Children, many accompanying their parents in line with local traditions, laughed or cried when the livestock breeder slit the throat of the animals and hung their carcass nearby to allow blood to drain.

But Jordan's economic hardships have cast a shadow over this year's sales, customers and livestock breeders complained.

Many sheep breeders started setting up small tents to supervise their "sacrificial flock" last weekend, choosing fertile areas on the outskirts of Amman where sheep and goats lived their last days. Breeders said they have been fattening their flocks for more than six months in preparation for the 'Eid.

But they remain divided over the success of this year's business. However, they hoped sluggish business would pick up by the end of the four-day 'Eid, ending Tuesday.

Abdul Wahab Shaheen, who plans to sell 170 head on behalf of a breeder from Madaba, said, "Business so far is not as we expected. Until now

we have sold 60 sheep. Last year, business was best on the first day of the 'Eid. But we have to wait until the last day in order to see how business will turn out," Shaheen said.

Others blamed rainfall and cold weather conditions for low turnout.

"The cold weather encourages people to stay at home. If it was warmer, people would buy more," said Salt-based sheep breeder Musa Zou'bi who is marketing his 200 sheep in Amman.

High unemployment has pushed more breeders into the market.

"Unemployment brings up so many sheep breeders who try to make business," Zou'bi said.

Drought, caused by low rainfall this winter, also harmed stock breeders, many who have rushed to sell their livestock because they cannot afford to provide fodder to keep their animals.

Officials say it is the worst drought in 50 years.

"There is no grass. We buy the tone of fodder for JD95 and each sheep consumes one

kilogramme of fodder a day," said Mohammad Suleiman, a breeder setting his tent in Jubatha. "We have to sell the livestock even at a loss because we cannot afford to feed them any more," he added.

The high cost of fodder has not been offset by a commensurate rise in the per kilo price of meat. This year the price of meat ranges from JD1.75 to JD2 per kilogramme, while goat prices are slightly higher, from JD1.90 to JD2.20 per kilogramme.

One shepherd said people prefer to buy imported sheep because they cost around JD1.65 per kilogramme — 100 fils less than the price of locally-bred meat.

Sacrificed animals are either slaughtered and skinned on the spot or they are bought and then slaughtered at home.

Due to the potentially hygienic conditions which could result from animal blood and carcasses, municipalities all over the Kingdom have ordered breeders to leave each area as clean as it was found.

However, Mahmoud Abdul Hakim, an Egyptian who was employed to sell 120 sheep for another sheep breeder in Madaba commented that, "Business is good so far."

"Our family slaughtered two sheep every 'Eid Al Adha. But this year we only slaughtered one. Prices this year are very high. During the past couple of years we bought a sheep for around JD45 to JD50, this year an average sheep costs at least JD65," said Ibrahim Salhi, a resident of the Schneller camp near Rusafah. "Our economic situation is very bad. I know a man who went into debt in order to slaughter a sheep during this 'Eid Al Adha," Salhi explained.

Three killed, 25 injured in holiday road accidents

AMMAN (J.T.) — Two people died and 13 others were injured on Monday in a road accident on the Ma'in Spa Complex Road, some 30 kilometres southwest of Amman.

A spokesman for the Civil Defence Department (CDD) said the deaths and injuries occurred when a bus driver lost control of the vehicle which free-wheeled and overturned at the side of the road.

The spokesman said Royal Airforce helicopters assisted in the rescue operation, which also involved CDD and Public Security Department men and equipment.

The spokesman said seven injured were flown to the

Marka Military Hospital and six were transported by CDD men to Al Nadim Hospital in Madaba. The two who died were transported to Al Bashir Hospital in Amman.

According to the CDD report, the 13 injured are receiving treatment. They suffered bruises and bone fractures. It said the bus occupants were all young men aged 15-19.

Also Monday one person was killed and 12 others were injured in a road accident involving three cars in Wadi Shueib, south of Salt. The CDD transported the injured to the Salt Hospital for medical treatment.

Tourism revenues up 10.2 per cent

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan's total revenues from tourism in 1998 amounted to JD604.7 million; an increase of 10.2 per cent over 1997.

Statistics released by the Ministry of Tourism said a total of 1,256,428 tourists visited the Kingdom in 1998 which is 11.48 per cent over 1997.

According to the statistics visitors from the Americas were 108,612, most of whom came from the U.S., while the number of tourists from European countries was 219,455. This is a 8.34 per cent

drop in comparison with 1997 figures, but Europeans still accounted for 27.9 per cent of all tourists last year.

The statistics showed that a total of 772,427 tourists arrived from Arab Gulf countries and that 119,261 tourists came from Israel, registering a 25 per cent decrease from the previous year.

Of the overall number of tourists visiting Jordan last year 202,586 arrived by air and the rest by land.

Weatherman says chance of rain tomorrow

AMMAN (Petra) — The weather will be warm today with clouds appearing at high altitudes, meteorology department sources said Monday. The sources added that winds will be southwesterly moderate, freshening at times. However, the sources

expected a sharp drop in temperature on Wednesday with a possibility of rainshowers, particularly in the northern parts of the Kingdom. In Aqaba the weather will be warm and dusty at times, and winds will be southerly moderate to fresh.

Authorities release 20 Al Tahrir members under general amnesty law

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Security authorities have released more than 20 activists of an illegal Islamic party who were sentenced to different jail terms over the past year, a lawyer said on Monday.

The lawyer, Hani Zahdeh, said activists of Al Tahrir Party (Liberation) who were convicted of lese majeste and "membership in an illegal party" were released on Friday. The party's spokesman, Atah Abu Rasheh, was included in those released.

Zahdeh told the Jordan Times that the release was made upon orders from a legal committee, headed by the Chief of the Cassation Court Taher Hikmat, that was formed to look into the matter.

"The prisoners, who were not convicted of committing terrorist acts, have benefited from the amnesty law which denied amnesty to those convicted of terrorist acts," Zahdeh said.

The decision to release Al Tahrir Party activists followed a public amnesty signed by His Majesty King Abdullah last week under

which more than 2,500 prisoners and detainees are expected to be freed.

At least 500 prisoners and detainees were released from several correction and rehabilitation centres around the country last Wednesday and Thursday in line with the amnesty law.

The law, endorsed by the Parliament, excluded those who were convicted of theft, premeditated murders, embezzlement, bribery, slavery, espionage and the issuance of bad cheques from the amnesty.

Zahdeh indicated that among those who released on Friday were prisoners convicted of possession of explosives meant to be used in attacks against Israeli targets in the case that came to be known as the Ajloun case in 1996.

He identified those who were involved in this case and were freed as Ibrahim Ghraibeh, Yousif Rabay'ah and Ali Fakher.

The lawyer also said that prisoners who were convicted of masterminding the blasts in the Rivoli and Salwa cinemas in Amman and Zarqa in 1994 — known as

the Bayat Al Imam case — were among those released last week.

Zahdeh said that one of two prisoners sentenced by the military court in 1997 for his role in an attempted attack on a French diplomat was also released. He identified him as Salim Jaradat.

He indicated that the other person was denied amnesty because "he was convicted of masterminding terrorist acts."

The lawyer said that the only case not included in the amnesty was an attack against the General Intelligence Office in Baqaa refugee camp. The lawyer said they were excluded because those jailed are convicted of premeditated murder.

Meanwhile, a governmental committee responsible for looking into the release of detainees have ordered that hundreds to be freed in line with the amnesty law, a spokesman of the interior ministry said.

The committee, which includes representatives of the interior ministry and the Public Intelligence Department, was charged with reviewing the cases of the

detainees who committed crimes punishable by jail terms and financial penalties, said the spokesman who asked not to be identified.

It also includes those who were ordered detained by governors for manslaughter and honour crimes, he said.

"We have freed 210 Jordanian and foreign detainees and many others are expected to benefit from this decision," he told the Jordan Times.

He indicated that among those who expected to be released are illegal foreign workers who are detained for failing to pay fines for violating the Labour Law.

"Around 700 foreign workers of more than 50 nationalities will benefit from the amnesty. We will study their cases thoroughly before taking the decision to release them," the ministry official added.

He said the ministry will consult with foreign embassies to "finalise the release of foreign workers who are unable to pay their fines."

The remainder are expected to be released in the coming few days, the official said.

Shbeilat says authorities 'dropped surveillance'

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Laith Shbeilat, the outspoken opposition figure, said on Monday that the government of Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawaddeh has ordered the security authorities to end surveillance of his movements.

The move, which reflects the government's intention to improve relation with the opposition and introduce greater openness, followed a letter Shbeilat sent to Rawaddeh after he took office on March 4.

"The prime minister tele-

phoned to inform me that he has given orders to lift (security) surveillance around my house," Shbeilat told the Jordan Times.

Since then, the three plainclothes policemen stationed in their car round-the-clock near his residence and "who used to follow me like my shadow" have left, he said.

However, he claimed that his telephone conversations are being monitored.

"I have repeatedly complained to former prime ministers Abdul Salam Majali and Fayez

Tarawneh about these controls but no actions was taken by them," Shbeilat said.

But Interior Minister Nayef Qadi said he had doubts about Shbeilat's claims.

"I am not aware of such a thing (surveillance). This is the first time that I have heard that such a surveillance is imposed on any Jordanian citizen," Qadi told the Jordan Times.

Shbeilat, who heads a non-governmental organisation devoted to opposing peace with Israel, was sentenced to nine months in

jail last year after the State Security Court found him guilty of lese majeste.

The former Lower House deputy, who headed twice the powerful Jordan Engineers Association, is a fierce critic of successive governments' failure to fight corruption.

In 1992, he was sentenced to death by a military court after it convicted him on charges of plotting to topple the regime with the aid of a foreign country, Iran.

The sentence was immediately commuted by the late King Hussein.

Jordanian singer to participate in 'One Night of Peace' concert in U.S.

By Roufan Nahhas

AMMAN — Jordan's Rania Kurdi will be part of a "One Night of Peace" April 3rd in New Jersey with Danny Garcia, founder and executive director of Children of Our World Foundation, a non-profit organisation designed to promote world peace through children of all nations.

"The event will begin with a ten-mile walk from Sandy Hook National Park to Marine Park in Red Bank, New Jersey," said Kurdi, who is currently running her own talk-show in Amman.

"Garcia will be joined by thousands of children and will continue the walk to the United States, Europe and the Middle East."

Entertainers from different parts of the world have donated their time and efforts to make a unified statement of "One Night of Peace."



around the world since Dec. 7, 1996 calling for children's rights and world peace. He has walked over 12,000 miles throughout the United States, Europe and the Middle East.

Garcia has been walking

The song will travel with Garcia on his walk to Amman, where he hopes to deliver his message of peace at the opening of the Pan-Arab Games, "King Hussein Tournament," this August.

From Amman, he will continue his walk to Africa, Asia, China. It will culminate at the Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia.

Kurdi, who is a singer and a charity enthusiast, has been working in this field for a long time.

"I love working for charity as it gives me the chance to carry on the message of His Majesty the late King Hussein of peace," she said.

"I have worked with the handicapped, I have participated in the breast cancer awareness campaign, and worked with UNICEF," she added.

The event will carry famous names in the show business.

"Joan O'Neil and River Deep from England, Mary D'Arcy who portrayed Christine in The Phantom of the Opera, Carl Jurman conductor of The Lion King on Broadway, Bruce Foster, a songwriter and Grammy Award nominee and his band who co-wrote 'One Night of Peace,' Limit X from Africa, World Peace Prayer Society and many more," she said.

"Proceeds from the concert will go to Danny Garcia's Walk Around the World Foundation, the Dreams for Kids Foundation founded by Dennis McGinnis that grants special wishes to terminally ill children, and the Count Basie Learning Centre run by the Reverend Elmer Jackson that supports children's academic, social, recreational and cultural development," Kurdi said.

What's Going On

FILMS

German film "Jenseits der Stille" at Goethe-Institut, Jabel Amman on Wednesday, March 31 at 7:30 p.m.
"U.S. Marshals" at Books@Cafe, Jabel Amman, at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 45604578).

EXHIBITIONS

"Amman... A Meeting Point" by Swedish artists Ann Edholm and Hakan Rhenberg at Darat Al Funun, Jabel Weibdeh. Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists, until April 22.
Works on paper by Russian artist Yuri Pestov entitled "Al Ferouse, the Rose Garden" at the Jordanian Plastic Artists Association, Jabel Weibdeh, until March 31. (Tel. 4623297).

JUST to open community nursing programme

By Dana Charkasi

AMMAN — A new graduate community health nursing programme at the Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST) in Irbid is the first of its kind in the region to emphasise educating nurses to function at high levels in health promotion, preventative health, health maintenance and restoration, and education.

"The principles of the programme coincide with the World Health Organisation goals to build healthy nations. Community health is not well developed in Jordan, but it is recognised around the world as an essential component of improved health status."

Shirley Hoeman, visiting Fulbright Senior Scholar at JUST told the Jordan Times.

"Jordan's health system is primarily focused on the care for already ill people already; not on dealing with preventative measures to avoid illnesses," said Linda Haddad, faculty department head for community health nursing at JUST.

"But if you have serious weight problems, or cholesterol problems, it means illnesses are occurring as a result of a wrong lifestyle, and people do not know where to turn to," she added.

The programme started this academic year with 10 students.

"The idea came from our

Dean Rowaida Ma'aitah — herself a community health nurse — because we found that there are many problems in terms of preventative services and promotion of health care. We are really lacking these kinds of nursing specialties," said Haddad.

After a needs-assessment conducted by Ma'aitah found that Jordanians are in need of such services, the faculty developed the programme in cooperation with the University of Windsor in Canada.

"It was brainstorming for the last two years until we created the programme," she added.

Haddad told the Jordan Times that there are continuing education courses at

the Ministry of Health, and that other schools have a masters degree programmes in education, but that the JUST programme will be more clinically oriented.

The difference between normal nurses and specialised nurses is that "these nurses will really be specialised nurses, specialised in community assessment, health promotion, programme planning, evaluating, to produce programmes of a community and family levels," Haddad explained.

The graduates will be able to work at three different levels, with individual clients, with family clients, and with community clients," Haddad added.

As examples for future work environment for graduates, Haddad mentioned home-visit institutions where they could work in the field of rehabilitation and nursing, or in the Ministry of Health in the primary health care department and primary health care centres, or in hospitals where nurses could design discharge planning packages for people with chronic diseases such as diabetes or cardio-vascular diseases, or stroke patients, or work in the field of occupational health problems.

"It's up to the student to decide their specialisations," Haddad said.

The masters programme lasts 34 credit hours; that is a programme of two years.

The programme offers the students two options: a thesis option or a comprehensive exam option.

In the first case, students may write a thesis on their specialisation. In the latter, students will concentrate on course work, especially on clinical project courses. Either way, the students will receive their master degree in community health nursing. The graduate nurses will be called "clinical nurse specialist."

During the programme, students have to put into practice the theory they learn in different institutions in Amman, Irbid and in villages.

"Our students right now are trained by professors from three different facul-

ties," Haddad explained.

Haddad is the head of the department and assistant professor in community health nursing. Shirley Hoeman, Fulbright Senior scholar, is a professor of community rehabilitation.

Interest in the programme has been great given the fact that it is new and there is yet little public knowledge of it.

"We received 40 applications, but could only accept 10 students," Haddad said.

Reactions by official institutions have been positive.

"We have one military student from the Prince Rashid Military Hospital,

and we have one from the health ministry," she added.

Haddad believes graduates will have good work opportunities as Jordan lacks preventative health care. The graduates will work on three prevention levels: a primary prevention level focused on health education, immunisation and protective programmes; secondary prevention dealing with screening technique programmes such as the screening of women in order to check-up for breast cancer; and tertiary prevention focused on people with chronic illness, such as diabetes or cardio-vascular illnesses to help them restore normalcy to their lives.

Over 60 die as powerful earthquake hits India

LUCKNOW, India (AFP) — A powerful earthquake measuring 6.8 on the Richter scale hit northern India early Monday, killing more than 60 people and sparking widespread panic in several cities including New Delhi.

The epicentre of the quake, which struck at 00:35 a.m. (1905 GMT Sunday), was located in the remote Kumaon hills of Uttar Pradesh state, bordering China and Nepal, about 300 kilometres northeast of New Delhi.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Secretary Yogendra Narayan said 42 bodies had so far been recovered in the worst-hit district of Chamoli, where 90 per cent of the buildings had been destroyed.

Much of the damage was caused by landslides triggered by the tremors.

Another 19 people were reported dead in the adjoining district of Rudrapur, Narayan said, adding that 65 people had been injured, "many of them seriously."

Chamoli district, with a population of about 60,000, was the closest significant community to the epicentre, which seismologists pinpointed at latitude 30.2 degrees north and longitude 79.5 degrees east.

"This is an extremely remote region, and the toll is certain to rise as the information continues to come in. I know for a fact that they are still digging for bodies in Chamoli," Narayan said.

Seismologists said the

duration of the quake, which the Chinese authorities estimated at a greater magnitude of 6.9, was about 50 seconds.

Uttar Pradesh Home Secretary Naresh Dayal told AFP that Chamoli, which was without power or electricity after the quake, was still experiencing tremors.

"I just spoke to a local official there ... he said aftershocks are still continuing," Dayal said. Telephone lines with Chamoli were cut by the quake and two-way radio was the only source of communication.

"We expect the damage to be heavy because the quake was much worse than the quake in the area in 1991 which was 6.6 on the Richter scale," he said. Nearly 770 people died in the 1991 earthquake.

Dayal said nine medical teams had left for Chamoli and two air force helicopters were carrying out sorties in search of isolated communities that may have been badly hit.

"The first thing is rescue and medical aid ... food is available there so that is not a problem," he said.

Chamoli police superintendent Sridhar Pathak said five prisoners — four men and a woman — who were held in a police lockup, were among those killed when aftershocks rocked the town following the quake.

"The five died when a police barracks crashed on them. Five policemen were also injured in the col-

lapse," Pathak told AFP before the lines were cut.

Seismologists said more than 20 aftershocks had been recorded — the largest with a magnitude of 4.9 on the Richter scale.

Powerful tremors were felt in towns and cities throughout northern India and also shook the western Indian city of Pune.

Tens of thousands of city-dwellers fled their homes and stayed outdoors for the better part of the night following the quake and the aftershocks.

In New Delhi, where several high-rise buildings developed cracks, many residents said they had been alerted by panicky animals.

An earthquake of magnitude 6.0 on the Richter scale can cause severe damage, while one of magnitude 7.0 is capable of widespread, heavy damage.

"It was the strongest earthquake in the region recorded so far," S.K. Srivastava, additional director general of the national meteorological department, told reporters.

"The damage could be very large. It is impossible to predict an earthquake, but we know that this is a very, very seismic-prone zone," Srivastava said.

The Kumaon region lies between two major fault lines, where the great Eurasian plate meets and sinks under the Himalayan plate.

Monday's tremor was the ninth and largest quake of plus-six magnitude to hit the area this century.



New Paraguayan President Luis Gonzalez Macchi makes the 'V' sign to supporters in the senate moments after being sworn in as the country's new president, replacing Raul Cubas. Cubas, facing removal from office by congress for abuse of powers, resigned after a week of bloody conflict (Reuters photo)

Villagers flee volcanic eruption in Cameroon

YAOUNDE, Cameroon (AP) — Villagers on Monday were fleeing a weekend eruption on Mount Cameroon that caused violent quakes and fiery lava flows and destroyed an unknown number of homes, state radio reported.

Tremors began on the volcano, also known as Mount Fako or "chariot of the gods," on Saturday night, officials said.

By Sunday, lava was flowing down the southern slopes towards the villages of Edenau and Bakingele and a state-owned oil refinery some 25 kilometres away.

No casualties were immediately reported and the scope of the damage remained unclear. Some village huts were destroyed in the lava flows, the state radio station said without providing details.

One of the radio station's

transmitters was knocked out by tremors in the town of buca, about 20 kilometres from the peak, officials said.

Government officials called for calm. But a Cameroonian geology professor, Isaac Konfor Njilah, said several thousand residents in the area faced danger from the burning magma and poisonous gases.

Volcanic ash also threatened to cause raging bush fires in the lush, forested region, he added.

The volcanic lava could "bury anything it finds in its way, cause bush fires and forest fires, destroy farmland houses and kill by incineration," he said.

Njilah said the lava was flowing in two streams, one heading towards the Sonora state oil refinery on the outskirts of Limbe, an oceanic resort town about 25 kilometres south of the peak.

Residents in Limbe were "worried by the persistent and worsening rumbling of the volcano throughout the night," the radio station reported.

A statement from provincial government officials said the situation was "under control," but added the lava could flow a long way before solidifying.

The 4,095 metre volcano, one of Cameroon's main tourist attractions that draws thousands every year for a race up its black, rocky slopes, lies some 75 kilometres west of Douala, Cameroon's commercial hub and 300 kilometres west of the capital of Yaounde.

The mountain, which rises gradually from the gulf of Guinea is the highest peak in central and west Africa, has erupted five times in the past century, the last time in 1982.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Romanian PM better after heart attack

BUCHAREST (AFP) — The health of Romanian Prime Minister Radu Vasile has "visibly improved" after he suffered a heart attack at his office last week. Health Minister Alexandru Ciocalteu said Monday. If no complications arise, the government chief could be out of intensive care by Tuesday and leave the hospital by Saturday, Ciocalteu said. Vasile, 56, should however rest another week before going back to work. Ciocalteu said. During that time, Justice Minister Valeriu Stoica will take his place. Ciocalteu said the prime minister is "impatient" to hold talks with an International Monetary Fund (IMF) delegation expected to arrive in Bucharest next week. Doctors have recommended Vasile quit smoking and take regular exercise to avoid another heart attack.

British court delays Pinochet hearing

LONDON (AFP) — The British High Court postponed its hearing into a request for ex-Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet's release until after April 15, to give Home Secretary Jack Straw time to decide whether to allow Spain's extradition request to proceed. It also authorised lawyers for the 83-year-old general to appeal against Straw's decision last December to give the green light to extradition proceedings.

Former Paraguay general seeks asylum in Argentina

BUENOS AIRES (AFP) — Former Paraguayan General Lino Oviedo, fleeing an arrest warrant in his own country, has asked for political asylum in Argentina. Vice President Carlos Ruckauf said Monday. Ruckauf, who is acting president while President Carlos Menem is on an official visit to Italy, told reporters that Buenos Aires was studying an extradition request from Asuncion. The vice president said a decision may be made later Monday on Oviedo, who was detained last Sunday in an airport north of Buenos Aires. Oviedo landed at the airport in a small aeroplane from Asuncion, and was arrested at the request of Paraguayan officials, the Argentine Interior Ministry said. The retired general was the mentor of Raul Cubas, who resigned as president of Paraguay on Sunday following the assassination of his vice president that triggered several days of violence. Cubas was facing impeachment for failing to arrest Oviedo on charges of leading a failed coup. The general had turned himself in to presidential guards on Wednesday. It was not clear when he left their custody.

'Dozens of former leprosy patients join lawsuit against government'

TOKYO (AP) — Eighty-three former leprosy patients in Japan joined a lawsuit on Monday accusing the government of violating their human rights by segregating them from society, a news report said. Japan did not end its policy of placing sufferers of Hansen's disease, also known as leprosy, into remote colonies until 1996. The government apologised last year for its belated action to bring disease sufferers back into society. There are now 123 plaintiffs seeking a total of 14.72 billion yen (\$123 million) in compensation in a suit originally filed last July by 13 former patients at the Kumamoto district court in southern Japan, Kyodo news agency reported. The plaintiffs, who were kept in colonies in western and southwestern Japan, claim the government's 88-year-old policy of forced isolation violated their constitutional rights to seek freedom and happiness. Eighteen former patients joined the lawsuit last September and 14 more joined in December. On March 26, 13 former leprosy patients sued the government for a total of 2.4 billion yen (\$20 million) in compensation in a separate lawsuit filed in Tokyo.

Russia to perform sub-critical N-tests

MOSCOW (R) — Russia will carry out several "sub-critical" nuclear explosions later this year to assure the reliability of its atomic weapons, a spokesman said on Monday. Sub-critical tests do not cause nuclear blasts and are not forbidden under international treaties. Atomic energy ministry spokesman Yuri Besspalov told Reuters the tests, to be conducted on the Arctic island of Novaya Zemlya probably in the second half of 1999, were unrelated to tensions with the West over Yugoslavia. "We usually carry out several such tests every year so there is nothing new here," he said. "It's not at all connected to the situation in Kosovo and is an ordinary occurrence." The news of the tests came as Russia sharply criticised NATO for its bombing of Yugoslavia over the past week. On Monday Gennady Seleznyov, speaker of the lower house of parliament, said the state Duma would meet top government officials to discuss measures to boost the country's military capability, a shadow of its former might during Soviet times.

Fossils snatched from black market

ADELAIDE, Australia (AFP) — Police have saved 600-million-year-old fossils, stolen last year from reserves in South Australia's Flinders Ranges, from an international black market. Neville Pledge, South Australian Museum curator of fossils, said Monday some of the fossils recovered were invaluable as they were of the first known animals and did not exist anywhere else in the world. "They are soft-bodied animals, they don't have backbones, shells or skeletons. They are best interpreted as jellyfish and worms and a few other soft things that don't have a modern equivalent," Dr. Pledge said Monday. Dr. Pledge said there was a market for illegal trading of rare fossils to overseas museums or private collections. "There's a market for everything if you like to hunt for it, in the case of fossils some countries have put embargoes on the export of their fossils, but they still get out so there must be a black market," he said.

Ugandan kills 18 of rebels who murdered tourists

KAMPALA (R) — Uganda's army has killed another 18 of the Rwandan Hutu rebels who brutally murdered eight foreign tourists earlier this month, officials said. Uganda's minister of state for defense, Steven Kavuma, said 18 rebels were killed and another four were captured last Tuesday in a clash just over the border inside the neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo. He said they were part of the group of around 150 rebels which abducted 31 foreign tourists inside the Bwindi National Park of southwestern Uganda on March 1 and murdered eight of them — four Britons, two Americans and two New Zealanders. "We have been following the rebels since that incident," Kavuma told Reuters. "So there is no doubt that this is the same group that attacked Bwindi." The state-owned New Vision newspaper said one of the captured rebels had confessed to being involved in the tourist murders.

India ruling coalition faces dissent over minister

NEW DELHI (R) — India's year-old coalition government faced fresh dissent on Monday after a key partner insisted that Defence Minister George Fernandes be dismissed, United News of India (UNI) said.

Fernandes, in the eye of a storm since the sacking of a navy chief, should be "given a less sensitive portfolio in the overall interest of the government and national security," UNI quoted Jayaram Jayalalitha, leader of a powerful southern party, as saying.

Opposition parties have demanded that Fernandes be removed and a parliamentary probe be ordered into the summary sacking of Admiral Vishnu Bhagwat in December.

Bhagwat has since accused Fernandes of wrongdoing in arms deals and of violating the sacred military command.

The defence minister, who has faced controversy since last year when he named China as the country's greatest potential threat, has denied the admiral's charges and said he would rebut them at the first opportunity in parliament.

The Bharatiya Janata Party, which leads the fractious coalition, said it stood by Fernandes and praised him for his hard work.

"He is the simplest and most hard-working defence minister," UNI quoted Information and Broadcasting Minister Pramod Maba-

jan as saying at a BJP workers' conference.

Leaders of the BJP and its partners met over the weekend but failed to resolve the row over Fernandes, coalition leaders said.

"I had suggested in the coordination committee that his (Fernandes) action could be a major embarrassment... there is no question of my giving up the demand," Jayalalitha said.

Jayalalitha's All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) and a minor ally control 19 votes in the fragmented 545-member lower house of parliament, and two members of her party are in Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's council of ministers.

'One person in five in Britain lives in poverty'

LONDON (AFP) — Three times as many people in Britain live in poverty today as 20 years ago, bringing the total to one person in five, according to a government report released Monday.

The study, based on 1997 figures, showed that there are 12 million people in "relative poverty," meaning one person in every five out of Britain's population of 59 million.

That figure is almost three times the number of poor recorded in 1979.

The study by Prime Minister Tony Blair's Labour government also said that four million children were in poverty in 1995, also up three times on 20 years ago.

It said that two out of five children are born poor and that one in six families were

pushed into poverty with the birth of a child. Children born into poverty were more likely to remain in poverty, the study said, detailing that by the age of 22 months poor children already showed clear differences in their rate of educational development.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown said that poor children's "lives are damaged by low

incomes before their life's journey has even begun. This is bad economically and does even greater damage to society."

Half of people who grow up without gaining qualifications then fail to get a job, the study said, while eight out of 10 poor people who entered the workforce then managed to lift themselves out of the ranks of the poor.

The study — in tune with

a government "New Deal" scheme to subsidise companies taking on unemployed young people for job experience — said that poverty and unemployment were locked in a vicious cycle.

In the mid-1990s half of people ending unemployment found themselves jobless within a year.

One in seven men are stuck in such a cycle, compared to one in 14 in the

early 1980s, the study said. The government said that 375,000 people were taking part in the "New Deal" jobs scheme.

The period studied in the report underlined that Labour believes that poverty increased under the 17-year reign of the right-wing Conservative party, which began in 1979 and ended in 1997 with a Blair landslide victory.

One of those who came from the rain forest was Along Sega, a traditional headman who still dresses in loincloth and strings bear claws and fire flints around his neck.

"We ask the governments of the world and our government here to just pull back the bulldozers from our territories and

Swiss activist, champion of Borneo 'lost tribe,' detained

KUCHING, Malaysia (AP) — A Swiss activist who lived for years with one of the "lost tribes of Borneo" and was banned from Malaysia for his battle against the logging that has depleted their rain-forest habitat, was detained Monday.

Bruno Manser, who spent six years with the nomadic Penans of Sarawak in the 1980s, was grabbed by immigration officials after flying a motorised paraglider over the capital of this Malaysian state on northern Borneo island.

Manser, 45, has written a book and several documentaries have been made about his fight on behalf of the Penans, with whom he lived from 1984 to 1990. He estimates that only 60 families, about 260 Penans, still live a nomadic life in the Borneo

jungle, eating off wild fruit and game killed by poison blowguns and spears.

An estimated 9,000 Penans have moved into temporary settlements, many of which are provided by the government since widespread logging has devastated their lifestyle.

Manser, a shepherd by trade, has been banned from Malaysia for his outspoken efforts to obtain protective land rights for the Penans. He walked some 250 kilometres from the neighbouring Indonesian state of Kalimantan and snuck across the border and back to the Penans with whom he first lived in eastern Sarawak.

"The destruction of their forest, this is their life," Manser said before launching his

paraglider and sailing over a blue-domed mosque where a dozen Penans waved him on.

"They don't live for dollars. They live for all the resources that they find in the virgin forest, for the wild game and wild fruit."

Manser's oblong blue parachute carried the Sarawak and Malaysian flags and the words, "Taib + Penans" in both English and Arabic. As soon as he landed next to Sarawak Chief Minister Taib Mahmud's residence, he was pulled into a blue jeep with one of the Penans and driven away.

Since Manser left the rain forest in 1990 he has been a chief antagonist of Taib, calling on the state's top official to adopt territorial land rights for the indigenous people who

have lived in the rain forest for centuries.

He chose Monday for the stunt because it was a national holiday, the day after predominantly Muslim Malaysia celebrated the end of the haj pilgrimage.

"I hope the chief minister will ... help the Penans and protect one of the most beautiful forests in the world," Manser said. "It's a great thing Malaysia still has it, and I think there are people all around the world ready to protect this forest for generations and for the Penans."

James Ritchie, a press liaison for Taib, said the immigration department in Kuala Lumpur, the federal capital, had issued a statement saying Manser was under investigation.

Ritchie said it was likely Manser would be deported late Monday but was unable to reach officials because offices were closed for a public holiday.

One of Manser's supporters who travelled from Switzerland to help with the event said that the dozen Penans, some of whom walked out of the rain forest and were driven to Kuching for the event, had been detained by police.

One of those who came from the rain forest was Along Sega, a traditional headman who still dresses in loincloth and strings bear claws and fire flints around his neck.

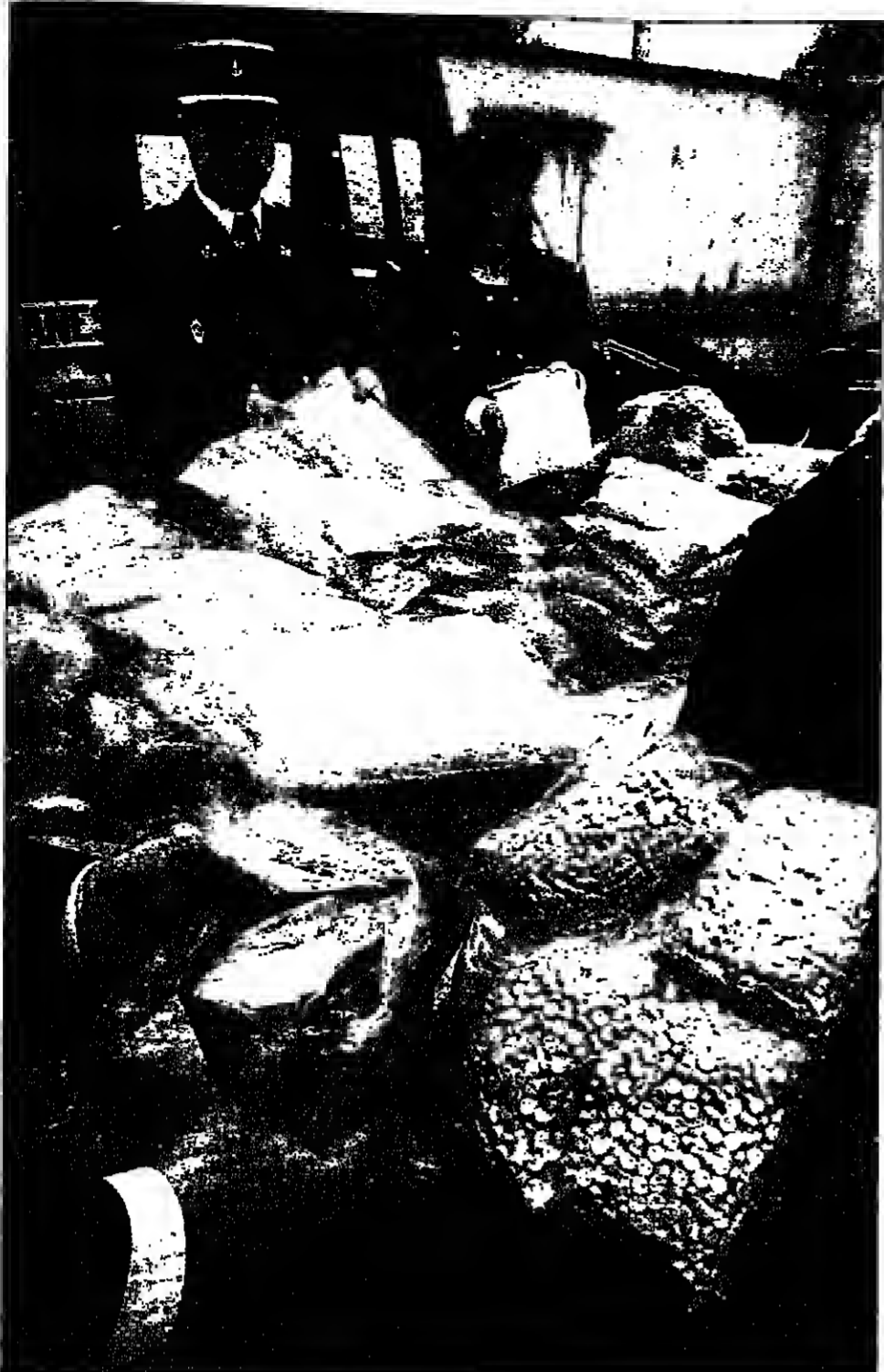
"We ask the governments of the world and our government here to just pull back the bulldozers from our territories and

to withdraw the logging licences," said Along, whose pierced earlobes have been stretched so wide he tucks them up around his ears.

"We come here and we don't ask for dollars. The only thing we ask for is for the government to protect our land."

The government several years ago announced it would set aside a 12,800-hectare biosphere for the Penans. But Manser and Along said that nothing had been formalised and that logging continued to eat away at their natural habitat.

Environmentalists estimate that 70 per cent of the forest in Sarawak have been set aside for logging since the timber companies arrived in the 1970s.



French customs officials stand near plastic bags containing some of the haul of 584,000 tablets of ecstasy seized by customs officers. The driver of a British-registered truck, coming from Belgium and Germany, was stopped last Friday with the tablets of ecstasy, 40 kg of cocaine, and 400 kg of cannabis (Reuters photo)

Friends rally around grieving Myanmar democracy leader

YANGON (AFP) — Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi was surrounded by friends at her home here on Monday as she mourned her husband's death. Michael Aris died of cancer in Britain on Saturday, friends told AFP.

"I found her wan but mentally strong. She appears to be holding out well under the circumstances with close friends and relatives in attendance," one of her close friends said.

The National League for Democracy (NLD) leader was being attended constantly by a personal doctor, he added.

Aung San Suu Kyi refused to go to her dying husband's bedside for fear that the military government in Yangon would not allow her back into the country.

Officials said at the weekend they would permit her to travel to Britain for his funeral but NLD aides told AFP she would not go as she did not trust the government to readmit her to Myanmar.

A Buddhist ceremony is planned for Aung San Suu Kyi's house in Yangon on April 2, involving 53 monks, to symbolise Aris' age when he died.

The junta effectively denied Aris a visa to visit his wife in Yangon one last time before he died, saying he was unfit to travel and would be a burden on Myanmar's limited medical facilities.

Sources said Aung San Suu Kyi was having trouble speaking to her two sons in Britain to arrange her husband's funeral as the junta had refused to provide her home with an international telephone line, despite repeated requests.

She had instead been forced to go to the British embassy to contact her family. The junta places strict controls on the Nobel laureate's freedom of movement and expression and rarely allows her contact with the outside world.

It was not clear whether Aung San Suu Kyi's two sons would seek permission to travel from Britain to see their mother.

A government spokesman told AFP on Monday there had never been any problem with visa applications lodged by her sons Alexander and Kim, who are both now in their twenties.

Aris' death has further sullied the junta's already tarnished image, with the United States, the United Nations, Britain and others condemning its reluctance to allow a farewell meeting in Yangon.

U.S. President Bill Clinton said at the weekend he was "saddened" and vowed to keep up U.S. opposition to the military authorities in Myanmar.

"I want to reaffirm to Michael's family and to all the people of Burma that the United States will keep working for the day when all who have been separated and sent into exile by the denial of human rights in Burma are reunited with their families, and when Burma is reunited with the family of freedom," Clinton said in a statement Saturday.

He praised Aris' "perseverance and dedication to his wife and family and to the cause of human rights and democracy."

A U.N. statement said Secretary General Kofi Annan was "dismayed that, despite efforts with the authorities in Myanmar, the couple were not able to meet during Dr. Aris' illness."

Philippine President Joseph Estrada meanwhile said Monday that the Yangon junta had missed out on a "confidence building step" by effectively refusing to allow a final meeting between Aung San Suu Kyi and her husband.

Aung San Suu Kyi led the NLD to an easy victory in 1990 elections but the junta has ignored the result and tried to crush the party and its grassroots support.

U.N. court frees genocide suspect

NAIROBI (AFP) — The U.N. Rwandan war crimes tribunal on Monday freed an ex-army officer accused of killing Rwanda's prime minister in 1994 and currently wanted for trial in Belgium on murder charges.

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), sitting in Tanzania, rejected a demand that Major Bernard Ntuyahaga, who is charged with the murder of premier Agatha Uwilingiyimana and 10 Belgian U.N. peacekeepers with her, be maintained in custody.

Ntuyahaga was released by the court (ICTR) in the northern Tanzanian town of Arusha, according to a statement received in Nairobi, which added: "This matter is now closed as far as the tribunal is concerned."

The tribunal had on March 18 granted a prosecution request that it drop the case of Ntuyahaga, in order to enable him to be tried in Belgium.

The U.N. court had said it had no power to order his extradition.

Then on Friday, Ntuyahaga asked the court to suspend his release and filed an appeal for a total acquittal, but the court decided he should be freed, the statement on Monday said.

The April 7 murders for which Ntuyahaga is wanted took place at the very start of three months of genocide by Hutu extremists in Rwanda that claimed the lives of between half a million and 800,000 minority Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

Ntuyahaga, who entered Tanzania illegally, originally turned himself in to the ICTR last June, saying that he feared being deported to Rwanda. He was charged with crimes against humanity.

Rwandan courts have handed down death sentences against genocide and war crimes convicts, while the U.N. tribunal, established late in 1994 by the U.N. Security Council, is responsible for trying suspected ringleaders and may impose a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.

Law professor Eric David, who represented the Brussels government at the ICTR, has told the specialist Hiredelle news agency that Tanzanian authorities were "open" to the possibility of arresting Ntuyahaga and extraditing him to Belgium, but the procedure was likely to be complicated.

Kigali has submitted an extradition request to Tanzania.

'Chinese FM says fishing ban applies to its own vessels'

MANILA (AFP) — A Chinese ban on fishing in waters surrounding disputed South China Sea islands applies to Beijing's vessels and not to foreign boats, the Philippine foreign office said here on Monday.

The assurance was relayed by Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan during a meeting with his Filipino counterpart Domingo Siazon in Berlin, they said. Both officials attended a meeting of Asian and European foreign ministers in the German capital Monday.

"Foreign Minister Tang made it clear that the two-month fishing moratorium they declared applies only to their fishing vessels and not ours," Siazon said in a statement released by the department of foreign affairs here.

"However, Foreign Minister Tang was hoping that the other littoral states in the South China Sea would do the same not only to allow the fish to grow but also as some sort of confidence-building gesture," Siazon added.

China said the moratorium would allow the fish to rest and replenish.

Brunei, China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam have laid claims in whole or in part to the Spratlys, a string of shoals and coral reefs that lie near strategic shipping lanes in the South China Sea.

Manila has protested Beijing's construction of fortified buildings on Mischief Reef which lies well within the Philippines' 200-mile exclusive economic zone, focusing international attention to the

Spratlys.

Chinese officials maintain that the structures are fishermen's shelters but Filipino defence officials say they appeared geared for military purposes.

Meanwhile, the Philippine foreign office said on Monday that Siazon raised the Mischief Reef issue during the meeting in Berlin, sparking a rebuke from the Chinese foreign minister.

China, which favours bilateral approach to the dispute, had earlier threatened to walk out of the meeting if Manila persisted in raising the issue.

Without mentioning China, Siazon referred in his remarks to a "claimant state" which had built structures "on a reef that is very near our shores and deep within our exclusive economic zone."

He also called for a time frame within which the dispute should be settled bilaterally, and failing a resolution, referred to world bodies such as the United Nations.

The foreign office here said Tang did not walk out but expressed his dismay during a private meeting with Siazon on Monday.

"Foreign Minister Tang regretted that we decided to push through with our statement. He felt that the ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) was not the right place to raise the issue," Siazon said in a statement from Berlin.

But the Philippines' top diplomat said he told the gathering that the South China Sea problem had regional and global implications because of its strategic

location.

He warned that an escalation of the dispute would have "serious implications to the peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region" because it would hamper "freedom and safety of navigation that is vital to world commerce and trade."

A bulk of East Asia's oil imports pass through sea lanes near the Spratlys.

In another development, the head of the Philippine Senate's defence committee on Monday urged the government to recall its ambassador to China over the Mischief Reef dispute.

Senator Rodolfo Siazon, a former armed forces chief, said Manila should temporarily recall Ambassador Romualdo Ong because Beijing "seems intent on pursuing an aggressive policy against the Philippines."

Chinese dissident calls for reevaluation of Tiananmen

TAIPEI (AFP) — Prominent exiled Chinese dissident Wang Dan said on Monday he could lead a normal life of his own only after Beijing authorities reevaluated the 1989 Tiananmen massacre of pro-democracy demonstrators.

"I wish to live a life of my own, without the halo, or burden, of the June 4 Tiananmen incident, but there is a responsibility that I just can't shrug off," Wang told the Voice of Taipei radio station in an interview.

"Only when the Tiananmen incident is reassessed, the families of the victims rehabilitated and responsibilities of the event cleared up will my conscience be at ease and I can start seeking new space in my life," he said.

A reevaluation by Beijing would encourage political

participation by the people, which could help push for reforms on the mainland, he said.

Wang, now studying history at Harvard University, was a student leader of the 1989 pro-democracy protest which was crushed by Chinese troops. Several hundred students were believed killed.

The 30-year-old dissident is in Taiwan on a nine-day visit as a guest of Taiwan's Harvard University Alumni Association.

Wang visited the National Palace Museum Tuesday before meeting Taipei Mayor Ma Ying-jeou, who had studied law in Harvard, and Overseas Chinese Affairs Minister Chiao Jen-Ho.

Ma recalled the night of the protests when thousands of Taiwanese gathered in a local memorial hall in support of

Tiananmen demonstrators and were shocked by gun shots heard from telephone links through loudspeakers.

Ma has joined Tiananmen commemorations every year to show his support for Chinese pro-democracy protesters.

People on the island have donated \$6 million to help pro-democracy dissidents following the incident, Ma said.

Wang was first arrested in July 1989 and later received a four-year jail term.

He was paroled in 1993 but rearrested three years later and sentenced to 11 years' imprisonment for "trying to overthrow the government."

He was freed in April last year and sent into exile in the United States on medical parole.

'Ireland set to join Partnership for Peace'

DUBLIN (AFP) — Ireland plans to join the NATO-linked Partnership for Peace (PfP) organisation later this year, Prime Minister Bertie Ahern said on Monday.

"I do not think it is in the national interest to hold back any longer. There would be some who say we have held back too long," Ahern said in a speech on the country's traditional neutrality stance.

The move represents a policy U-turn for Ahern and his Fianna Fail party. When opposition leader in 1996, he said the case for joining PfP "had not been made".

PfP was originally a "waiting room" for Eastern European countries seeking full NATO membership, the prime minister said, but was now centred round the peace-keeping tasks of the 1990s.

"The government has no hidden policy agenda that would involve joining a military alliance and remains, along with all other parties, committed to consulting the

people in a referendum should there be an agreed proposal involving any change in that situation."

Ahern said Ireland decided to stay out of NATO in 1949 mainly because of the partition of the country.

The Northern Ireland peace agreement had brought a new era of far more cordial relations with Britain.

"PfP will undoubtedly soften the divide on defence policy between North and South and between Britain and Ireland, while still maintaining distinctive positions."

PfP membership was a logical extension of Irish foreign policy, "not a departure or aberration from the independent foreign policy tradition that we have developed and of which we are rightly proud."

Ahern said being an "isolated republic" was never a beneficial foreign policy.

Approval for joining PfP will be sought from parliament in the summer.

Rescue workers sift through debris in Mont Blanc tunnel

CHAMONIX, France (AP) — Amid fears the roof might cave in, firefighters and police sifted through wreckage in the Mont Blanc tunnel on Monday in a bid to identify charred remains and search for possible other victims.

At least 40 people died in the blaze that broke out on Wednesday. Only five of them have been identified.

Radio reports said small fires were still burning on Monday. But the temperature had dropped sufficiently for rescue workers to go about their task.

French Prime Minister Lionel

Jospin and his Italian counterpart Massimo D'Alema arrived Monday to pay tribute to the dead.

"When I ponder certain images that were shown to me, there are no words to describe my immense compassion for the victims and their families," Jospin told reporters.

Two bodies were taken from the 12-kilometre tunnel on Sunday. But the evacuation process was proving slow, and officials feared the tunnel's severely damaged roof might collapse in parts.

Firefighters say it is still possible they will discover more bodies at the centre of the tunnel, where massive chunks of concrete litter the roadway.

The fire broke out on a Belgian truck carrying flour and margarine through the tunnel. It raged for 50 hours until dozens of firefighters from France, Italy and Switzerland managed to control the blaze.

All but a few of the victims died in their vehicles.

The tunnel near Chamonix, a French alpine resort at the foot of Mont Blanc, connects Italy and France and serves as a major trucking route. It is

expected to be closed for weeks.

French judicial authorities immediately opened an investigation, and say criminal charges may eventually be brought.

Officials have been reluctant to talk about what might have led to the inferno. Investigators have not been able to examine the entire tunnel.

French and Italian officials will meet in Turin on Wednesday to discuss initial findings, Jospin said. The French premier also said studies would be carried out on 20 tunnels in France to assess security

standards.

A recent report by the fire department of the Haute-Savoie region where the tunnel is located has raised questions about the feasibility of carrying out rescue operations inside the tunnel in case of a serious accident.

But French officials have rejected criticism that security measures were inadequate.

About 2,000 trucks pass through the tunnel on an average day.

Local politicians are calling for the roadway to be closed to truck traffic.

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Nuclear reactor shut down in Ukraine

KIEV (AP) — Power output was reduced Monday at the Chernobyl nuclear plant's only working reactor, and at a separate power plant a nuclear reactor shut down, officials said.

The output of Chernobyl's reactor No. 3 was halved following a generator malfunction, which is expected to take about five days to fix, the plant's press service said. No radiation leaks were reported.

Chernobyl was the site of the world's worst nuclear accident in 1986 that destroyed its reactor No. 4. Another reactor has not been functioning since a fire in 1991 and a third one has been shut down permanently.

Ukraine has pledged to fully close the plant by 2000 but says it needs western aid to help it complete two new nuclear plants to compensate for Chernobyl's lost power.

The former Soviet republic is heavily dependent on nuclear power, which accounts for more than 40 per cent of the nation's electricity needs.

At the same time, Ukraine's nuclear officials acknowledge that the number of reactor malfunctions at the country's five

nuclear plants is increasing because plants cannot afford to fully finance reactor safety upgrades.

Meanwhile, reactor No. 3 at the northwestern Rivne nuclear plant was shut down early Monday by its automatic safety system.

Plant experts were investigating the cause of the malfunction, which did not result in a radiation leak and was not dangerous to the reactor's safety, the state nuclear energy Energoatom said.

The reactor was expected to be restarted by Sunday, Energoatom said.

Last week, output was reduced at the Zaporizhia and Yuzhnaya nuclear plants, and plant officials said the measure was taken to save nuclear fuel. The plants lack money to buy more.

In another sign of Ukraine's nuclear troubles, nuclear plant employees have been demonstrating since late February to demand overdue wages, but the government so far has failed to raise the 150 million hryvna (\$40 million) required to pay off the debt.

Two suspects found in old Cambodian grenade attack

PHNOM PENH (AP) — On the eve of the second anniversary of a savage grenade attack against an anti-government protest, a Cambodian official said on Monday that two suspects have been located and questioned by the government's human rights commission.

Om Yentieng, Cambodian human rights commission chairman, said the two unnamed suspects were initially identified by opposition leader Sam Rainsy during an investigation by the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation.

"We have found them, but I am not certain that they were the ones who threw the grenades," Om Yentieng said.

He would not disclose any details about the suspects, saying only that "we have learned something from them" and that court prosecutors have determined there is enough evidence to make indictments.

Sam Rainsy — the target of the March 30, 1997, attack — has accused Prime Minister Hun Sen of masterminding the terrorist strike.

Attackers lobbed grenades

into a Sam Rainsy-led rally outside the national assembly building, killing at least 16 people and injuring about 100 others. Afterwards, several suspects ran into a heavily guarded compound where one of the prime minister's homes is located.

Sam Rainsy said on Monday that the two suspects are probably former bodyguards of Hun Sen's who had come to him looking for protection.

"They came because they were afraid for their lives. They said other suspects had been killed to destroy evidence of the attack," he said.

Saying he could do little to protect the alleged killers, Sam Rainsy put the two in touch with a human rights organisation.

The suspects were later arrested and changed their story, he said, claiming they had been paid by Sam Rainsy to make an allegation against Hun Sen.

Hun Sen denied any involvement in the attack and initially suggested that Sam Rainsy had the grenades thrown at himself as part of an elaborate anti-gov-

ernment conspiracy. Hun Sen's theory seems unlikely, however, since Sam Rainsy apparently escaped serious injury or death only because one of his bodyguards sacrificed his life by throwing himself in front of the opposition politician.

The FBI — sent to investigate because an American was injured by the blasts — produced a series of sketched portraits of the attackers based on testimony from witnesses. At least one suspect was identified — Kong Samreth, a former military policeman known as "Brazil" with murky ties to several parties.

No arrests were ever made in the attack, however, adding to Cambodia's atrocious track record on investigations of politically motivated crimes. No convictions have been made in any high-profile murders of opposition supporters.

Om Yentieng said he will publicise information on the two grenade-attack suspects later this month when he appears before the United Nations Human Rights Commission during its annual conference in New York.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab national daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation Established 1975
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University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman

Telephones: 5684311, 5699634, 5667171, 5603585

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The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays. Subscription and advertising rates are available from the Jordan Times Advertising Department

Keeping the media away

NINETY PER cent of Kosovo's two million inhabitants are ethnic Albanians. NATO spokesperson Jamie Shea said that more than 500,000 Kosovars are now displaced from the crisis — meaning that some 25 per cent of the Albanian population has been ethnically cleansed. The displacement is, he said, a humanitarian disaster unprecedented in Europe since World War II. Bratislava Morina, the Serb refugee commissioner says the NATO claim is nothing short of "pure propaganda." According to Morina, Albanians are leaving their homes in areas where NATO is striking civilian targets; to save themselves from their NATO rescuers, rather than Serbian violence.

Russia "claims" that more than 1,000 civilians have died in NATO strikes, but a Yugoslav U.N. envoy said casualty figures cannot be confirmed. Albanian sources say government forces "appeared to be allowing" refugees to leave on specific routes to drive as many Albanians as possible from Kosovo.

The fact of the matter is that no one knows what is really happening in the Balkans, and thanks to Milosevic's decision to boot the media out of the country, no one probably will for a very long time. The tragedy is that it will be years before the world can reach an informed opinion on what has transpired.

Certainly, the decision to expel the media is, to say it mildly, a suspicious one. If ethnic Albanians are fully secure in their lives and livelihoods, and if NATO bombings are in fact another exercise in U.S. hegemony, why harass and expel journalists who, at the end of the day, seek the truth?

If in fact, the Serbian machine has fallen victim to U.S. hegemony, Milosevic might take a lesson from Iraq, which has invited the press to take full note of the humanitarian tragedy the U.S. has wrought on that country under the guises of disarmament and democracy. The media has exposed American policy on Iraq for what it is — officially sanctioned genocide — and has begun turning the tide of world opinion.

But it is likely the truth that Milosevic fears, and be more than anyone at this moment recognises two truths that are as sure as death: Seeing really is believing, and the pen is still mightier than the sword.

Being denied both, we can only rely on what we are told by those thousands of refugees streaming out of Kosovo. And speaking from experience, we in the Middle East do not believe that hundreds, let alone thousands, of people willingly and obligingly abandon their land and livelihoods unless they are consistently, violently aggressed upon. There is no smoke without a fire, as they say, and yesterday, we heard that Pec was burning.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RATS Fahed Fanek said if Kosovo's conflict is one between Muslims and Christians, NATO would not interfere. If the issue were human rights violations and the denial of self-determination, NATO would be busy restraining Israel, forcing it to withdraw from other people's land and restraining it from harming the Palestinians, added Fanek. But the current war is about whether or not Yugoslavia, one of the few "fortresses" remaining against U.S. domination, will keep its unity and regime, he said. Even if the NATO secretary general pretends that the attack was democratic and unanimous, the truth is that NATO aggression was a Congress-approved U.S. decision taken by President Bill Clinton to preserve his credibility, said Fanek. Just like the superpower's campaign against Iraq, the current battle against Yugoslavia will achieve the contrary of the stated objectives, according to Fanek. The writer added that in Iraq the excuse was maintaining UNSCOM's work, but the committee left the country for good, while in Yugoslavia America claims it wants to protect Albanian civilians, but the result was that Yugoslavians started destroying everything. The statements of U.S., U.K. and NATO officials reveal that Hitler has not died and Nazism is still working under the guise of democracy, Fanek concluded.

AL DUSTOUR'S Yasser Za'atreh said whatever Israel's position towards the issue of Lake Tiberias' water is, a crisis will occur this summer and may continue through the coming years. The government is expected to announce its plan to cope with the problem and it is obvious that increasing water prices will be one of the scheme's objectives. It will be difficult to confront and the hope is that prices will be acceptable, taking people of limited income into consideration, added Za'atreh. The writer said he is not against a sizeable increase in the price of water for high consumers, adding that it is important that the state gets such money from "wealthy" areas to renew worn-out water networks. The objective of such policies should focus on minimising the negative effects on the poor through the contributions of the wealthy, said Za'atreh.

Confederation: Not now, not later

By Dr. Fahed Fanek

ON ONE thousand occasions, if not more, we have heard and read the Jordanian response to the call for confederation between Jordan and Palestine. Jordanian officials say the idea is premature. Confederation can take place only between two independent states, while Palestine is not yet a sovereign state. Therefore a confederation between Jordan and Palestine will amount to an extension of self-rule to Jordan, thus allowing Israel to have a say in the most sensitive aspects of the confederation including Jordan.

So far the issue is quite clear and Jordanians' negative reaction is logical. However, the justification offered to reject confederation may create some confusion in the minds of

many. The aforementioned reason is enough to shelve the confederation project until further notice, or to keep the project in Yasser Arafat's pocket, but it should be understood that this reason is not the only reason to reject confederation. The absence of this reason will not in itself pave the way and remove objections, at least from a Jordanian point of view.

Let us imagine for a moment that the Palestinian National Authority, led by Arafat, was able to build an internationally recognised Palestinian independent state, over all the territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with its capital in Jerusalem, and that it was able to dismantle all Israeli settlements, and gain full control over its borders, airports, sea ports, bridges, and water resources, and

'Confederation may be sold as unity between two Arab peoples, but it is in fact an Israeli project to solve Israel's demographic dilemma at the expense of Jordan'

that Israel and the U.S. acknowledged and accepted all the above achievements without any conditions or strings attached.

We of course need to be extremely imaginative and overly optimistic to believe that such a miracle could happen in our time. The question under this theoretical assumption is whether a confederation may be established between the two independent states of Jordan and Palestine.

My unequivocal answer is no. Confederation is not acceptable even if Palestine becomes an independent state. I shall offer five arguments to prove my point of view.

First is that a Palestinian state will have second thoughts, and would like to maintain its independence. After all, confederation is only a way out of hopelessness and the dead street.

The second reason is that confederation is a weak unifying formula susceptible to collapse. All confederations in today's world fell, including the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia. As a matter of fact, there is no standing confederation in the world to day, so why should we start one?

The third is that confederation between Jordan and Palestine means one entity with two heads and two political regimes. The next inevitable step is struggle between the two regimes and the ensuing fall-out, which no side needs.

The fourth is that Jordanians are keen to maintain the Jordanian nature of their state. They are entitled to reject changing this identity, which could take place under the reality of demographic formula. In a confederation,

Jordanians will become a minority. These are real concerns which should not be covered up or ignored.

The fifth is that all the economic benefits that may accrue to the two parties as a result of confederation can be achieved without the confederation.

Jordanians strongly support the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. They are against mixing the cards, which will only serve Israeli ambitions to swallow the territories while getting rid of their population.

Confederation may be sold as unity between two Arab peoples, but it is in fact an Israeli project to solve Israel's demographic dilemma at the expense of Jordan.

It is for these reasons that confederation must be rejected now and always.

The L.A. Eight and the U.S. Supreme Court

A depressing performance

By Anthony Lewis

'The executive should not have to disclose the 'real' reasons for deeming nationals of a particular country a special threat — or indeed for simply wishing to antagonise a particular foreign country by focusing on that country's nationals'

— U.S. Supreme Court

IT IS the year 2002, and violence has erupted again in Northern Ireland. The U.S. Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS) decides to target for deportation all resident aliens who have endorsed or contributed to Noraid, an American support group for the Irish Republican Army. One of those targeted is Padraig Phelan. He came to the United States legally 22 years ago from Ireland and has a green card; his wife and three children are American citizens. Over the years he has attended some rallies for a united Ireland, and given money to Noraid drives for schools and hospitals. Citing those activities, the INS takes him into detention.

He goes to court, but the court says it is powerless to intervene. He is deported.

That could not happen here, could it? Yes it could, thanks to a Supreme Court decision last month. It was a decision with great poten-

tial impact, yet the court reached it almost off-handedly, in a way that mocked its judicial process.

The case involved eight aliens, resident in Los Angeles, whom the INS has been trying to deport for 12 years. Various grounds for deportation were asserted. But the underlying point was that the eight were connected to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).

The PFLP is a faction of the Palestine Liberation Organisation that has opposed peace deals with Israel and carried out terrorist acts. But the INS did not assert that the eight had anything to do with terrorism.

The claim, rather, was that they had distributed PFLP literature and raised money for such things as schools and hospitals.

The eight asked the federal courts to stop the deportation process on the grounds that they had been selectively targeted in

retaliation for political activities. Hearings found that they had been, and enjoined the INS A court of appeals panel agreed.

The INS asked the Supreme Court to review the lower court decision, asserting two claims: (1) that the first amendment rights of the eight had not been violated, and (2) that they had gone to court too soon. The Supreme Court refused to hear the first but granted limited review of the second claim, saying it would consider whether the Immigration Act of 1996 barred the eight from going to court until they were under final orders of deportation. The parties, following the rules, briefed and argued only that question.

When the Supreme Court decided the case, it held that the 1996 law did bar the eight's lawsuit. That won the case for the INS. But the court went on to address the question it had told the parties it would not consider.

Justice Antonin Scalia, writing for a 6-10-3 majority,

said an alien against whom the INS moved had "no constitutional right to assert selective enforcement as a defence against his deportation." In other words, targeting a group of aliens because of their politics did not violate the first amendment.

Justice Scalia went further, saying that the government could pick out a group of aliens for political reasons but keep the reasons secret. "The executive," he said, "should not have to disclose the 'real' reasons for deeming nationals of a particular country a special threat — or indeed for simply wishing to antagonise a particular foreign country by focusing on that country's nationals."

That sweeping language gives the government unreviewable power to target legal immigrants for political reasons. In the time of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, the Administration could have deported Chilean exiles who demonstrated against

the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet.

Even legal immigrants who have done nothing political can be targeted to "antagonise" their country of origin. The INS would deport them for technical violations of their status.

Scalia said selective targeting by the INS was not a constitutional problem because deportation is not criminal punishment. But the Supreme Court has held that a government agency violates the first amendment when it fires employees on a political basis. That point would have been argued by counsel if the court had not misled them by saying it would not consider the issue.

The Supreme Court's great power in our system is justified by a process of decision that is principled and fair. In this case the court subverted its process and broke its word. For those of us who revere the institution, it was a depressing performance.

Arctic comeback:

Canada's aboriginals spearhead a cultural revival

By Gwynne Dyer

"I REBELLED and didn't have any respect for the law. I got into alcohol and drugs and I got into trouble." It was an all too typical pattern for a young native man in Canada's high north: By the time he was 17, Paul Okalik was already serving a jail sentence for breaking into a post office. But only 17 years later, on Thursday, April 1, he became the first premier of the new territory of Nunavut, the largest area of the planet to be under "native" rule.

In a territory ten times the size of Britain, taking in all the eastern Arctic of Canada, the official language is no longer English or French. It is Inuktitut, the language of the Inuit people (formerly known as Eskimos) who make up 85 per cent of its population.

"This is a test case of a public government where aboriginal people will be the majority," says Jack Anawak, the outgoing "interim commissioner" who has helped to shepherd Nunavut to self-government.

It's not a trend that's going to sweep the planet, because there aren't many places left where the aboriginal people are in the majority. If the land was any good for agriculture, people from some stronger and more numerous farming culture grabbed it long ago, leaving only shattered fragments of the old hunter-gatherer cultures to idle their lives away.

From the Bushmen of Namibia and the Vedda of Sri Lanka to the

Australian Aborigines and the North American Indians, the surviving aboriginal societies have horrendous problems: the poverty and despair are so deeply rooted that an appalling high proportion take refuge in alcohol and drug abuse, often followed by suicide. The Inuit of Nunavut are no exception to that, with a suicide rate six times higher than in southern, non-native Canada.

But living in the high north does carry one great advantage: Nobody wants to steal your land. They may want to dig mines or build bases on tiny patches of it here and there, but nobody who does not know how to live off the land at 30 below has any use for the vast expanses of terrain that stretch between. No large-scale settlement from outside means that the native culture has at least the possibility of making a comeback.

That's what Nunavut is about, and the reason that the federal government in Ottawa collaborated in carving up the old Northwest Territories to create an Inuit-majority region in the eastern half of the Canadian Arctic was precisely so that the Inuit would have a chance to modernise (or not, if they prefer) in their own language and on their own terms. By an extraordinary coincidence, the same possibility is coming into existence more or less spontaneously on the other side of the North Pole.

In the old Soviet Union the government, determined to demonstrate its

It's not a trend that's going to sweep the planet, because there aren't many places left where the Aboriginal people are in the majority... [most are] shattered fragments of the old hunter-gatherer cultures idling their lives away

mastery over nature, built towns and cities all over Russia's high north. To fill them with people, it offered high wages and extra privileges to southerners, mostly Russians, who would go and live there. It would have made better economic sense to work the mines like offshore oil wells, bringing in work-crews in shifts, but the Soviet mania for building things triumphed over rationality.

This reduced the native peoples of the north to minorities on their own land, and completely undermined the enlightened Soviet policy of giving each "native" people its own autonomous district or region. It's not much use for the Chukchis, for example, to have their own autonomous region if over 90 per cent of the region's people are from outside — as was the case only ten years ago. But now things are changing.

The Chukchis' home in the Chukotka peninsula, just across the Bering Straits from Alaska, is a good example of what is happening in post-Soviet Russia as the subsidies for living in the high north vanish and the desperate non-native residents flee southwards. In 1989, it contained 12,000 Chukchis and 165,000 non-natives. The Chukchi numbers have not changed, but non-natives are now down by more than half to 75,000 — and their number will fall much further as Moscow encourages the mining industry to switch to shift-workers who fly in and out. This creates an

opportunity for the Chukchis, portrayed as stupid yokels in a thousand Russian jokes, to revive their language and their fading culture. Or, rather, to rebuild their cultural identity and to find ways of modernising that do not violate it further.

"We need to find a middle way, so as not to forget the way our ancestors lived but not to abandon the things we've learned in Soviet times," explained Vere Gergina, a Chukchi folk singer in the village of Konergino.

Similar possibilities are coming into being all across the Russian north, but the Chukchi case is particularly resonant because they share common ancestors with the North American Eskimos and Inuit (two names for a single people).

The "Thule Eskimos" exploded out of Alaska around 800 AD, sweeping the previous inhabitants of North America's high Arctic aside, and were all the way across to Greenland by 1200. They had a technology extraordinarily well designed for Arctic conditions, they were very good warriors — and since they were lucky enough to conquer what farming peoples see as a barren part of the world, they have not lost it all again.

The Alaskan Eskimos are not a majority in their own territories any more, nor are the native peoples in the western half of Canada's old Northwest Territories. Greenland has an Inuit majority, but their language and culture have

been heavily eroded by centuries of Danish colonial rule. Nunavut is where the Inuit/Eskimo people are least damaged and most "authentic," and where they have the best chance of building an independent cultural future for themselves.

Will it work? Large amounts of federal money in capital grants and annual subsidies will help, as will the fact that almost everybody in Nunavut (including many of the longer-resident whites) speaks Inuktitut. There are lively print and broadcast media in Inuktitut, and now there is also an elected government.

There is, on the other hand, not much of an economy — 40 per cent of the population is unemployed — and a birth rate that will double the present population of 25,000 in only 14 years. There are the dreadful cultural wounds that come from living with defeat and helplessness for so long, and the self-destructive behaviour which that elicits in so many of the young. Nunavut could end up as a frozen rural slum.

But it could also become a beacon that encourages the other native peoples of the circumpolar regions to rediscover their own identities and rebuild their self-reliance. The circumstances throughout the high north are very favourable — and, as Paul Okalik observes, it is certainly worth a try. "We'll be able to make our own mistakes and fix them up. That would make a nice change."

Egypt and Israel: Between war and peace

Exactly 20 years after the signing of the peace treaty, Egypt and Israel find themselves not so much in a cold peace but, according to some, in a cold war, writes the Jerusalem Post's Ben Lynfield

CAIRO — In the run-up to today's 20th anniversary of the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty, the only Egyptian paying attention to the milestone were 10 members of Egypt's parliament who launched an effort to annul the historic document.

The campaign — which would certainly have been thwarted by the government — never got off the ground because it failed to elicit support from the main opposition parties. The overwhelming majority of Egypt's political elite does not, it seems, want to get back on a war footing with Israel or risk a head-on collision with the government over the treaty.

But two decades after Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian president Anwar Sadat signed the agreement on March 26, 1979, leading analysts in Egypt's capital see little basis for closer relations or regional cooperation — certainly not in the absence of full Israeli agreements with the Palestinians and Syria.

On the contrary, an increasingly prevalent view in Cairo is that the parties to the peace treaty are now rivals for regional primacy.

This tendency coincides with the emergence of a group of peace proponents, the Cairo Peace Movement, that calls for dialogue with Israelis and argues that the peace treaty has served Egyptian interests well.

For Egypt, the treaty's main and enduring achieve-

ments were to spare the country further bloodshed after five wars (including the War of Attrition), to spare the entire region a full-scale war, and to "liberate" Sinai from Israeli occupation, according to analysts. Moreover, the ensuing peaceful climate has been central to the country's economic development, they say.

"People here have gotten used to no war — no one is talking about war anymore," says Saadeddin Ibrahim, head of the Ibn Khaldun Centre, a Cairo think-tank.

Abdul-Moneim Said, director of the Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies and a leader of the peace group, highlights the recovery of Sinai among the treaty's foremost accomplishments. In an article in the Al Ahram weekly, Said lauded Sadat for "seizing the right moment to launch a political drive in the West to push Israel back."

In Ibrahim's view, the peace treaty's centrality for Egyptians must be understood in the context of three other policy initiatives by Sadat with which it was — and remains — intertwined: overall reconciliation with the West, the economic "open door" policy that was the forerunner of current liberalisation efforts and a move towards political pluralism after decades of domination by the Arab Socialist Union, the instrument of power created by former Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser.

All three, in Ibrahim's view, have prodded the country towards economic growth and political stability and will be continued. "Even though they have been applied at different speeds and different degrees of success, they have brought 25 years of peace and stability," he says.

In Egyptian eyes, the main failing of the treaty has been insufficient progress on the Israeli-Palestinian track, leaving the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict unresolved, says Ibrahim.

The settlement policies of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government and its suspension of the Wye agreement are making matters worse, putting peace supporters on the defensive, he says.

"These things really wipe out a lot of the achieve-

ments, they stop the opening of the Egyptian mind. I think Netanyahu has done more to damage the peace camp in Egypt than the hardliners among us," he says.

What Ibrahim terms the "callous behaviour" of Netanyahu towards the Palestinians is the latest of many Egyptian grievances about Israeli policies: Two months after the withdrawal from Sinai was completed came the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, prompting a three-year recall of Egypt's ambassador to Tel Aviv. A six-year dispute over Tabá and the quelling of the intifada also impinged on ties.

Israel for its part, has faulted Cairo for stunting the ties and not mustering support among the public for friendly relations, and has taken issue with Egyptian media portrayals of its leaders as Nazis and terrorists.

In Ibrahim's view, the relationship's future course depends on who will win the May 17 elections. If Netanyahu is reelected and continues his policies, the peace "will survive but it will not thrive," he says.

At the moment, the peace certainly cannot be said to be thriving. Of 22 fields of cooperation envisaged in the peace treaty, only agriculture has grown steadily.

There are reportedly about 500 Egyptians gaining advanced training in Israel every year, and some private Egyptian farms are using Israeli drip-irrigation techniques. Israel maintains a resident agricultural specialist in Egypt.

For moving ahead with the ties, Egyptian Agriculture Minister Yousef Wali has become the target of a fierce defamation campaign by the newspaper Al Shaab, a virulent critic of the government's economic and foreign policies. It has about 200,000 readers.

Its latest issue featured a caricature of a viper wriggling in the shape of Wali's name, while last week Wali was depicted as a knife stabbing at the map of Egypt. Articles termed him a "traitor" who is part of the "Zionist network," acting on behalf of Israeli ambitions to control Egypt.

With remarkable consistency, the Egyptian government has shunned regional

cooperation projects involving Israel — the reason usually given is that they must await a comprehensive peace.

A recent Israeli bid for stepped-up regional tourism cooperation for the year 2000 was reportedly rebuffed.

Last week, when Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and King Abdullah II linked their two countries' power grids at Tabá, officials took pains to stress that Israel was being left out — until it makes progress towards a comprehensive peace.

The same argument has been used to explain Cairo's lack of enthusiasm for economic cooperation. On one occasion, in 1997, it led a successful boycott of a regional economic summit to promote Arab-Israeli cooperation in Doha, Qatar.

According to one analyst, Egypt's reluctance to join with Israel in cooperative projects goes beyond its concern for the Palestinian and Syrian negotiating tracks: It is wary of growing Israeli influence in the region.

"Egypt does not want to accept that its regional role is diminishing," says Hala Mustafa of the Ahram Centre. "It has real fears of the Israeli role."

The two countries are competing over who will enjoy closer relations with the U.S., and which country is going to be the "key to the region" for outside powers, both economically and politically, she adds.

Cairo has in recent years depended heavily on its role as mediator in projecting its influence, and would like to do so in the future, Mustafa says. Two arenas for this are the Arab-Israeli conflict and U.S. relations with radical Arab states, as was demonstrated in its negotiations with Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi over the Lockerbie affair.

But Egypt views Israel as hampering it from being a mediator by preferring bilateral talks with the Palestinians and Syrians. Its lack of enthusiasm for the Wye agreement should be understood in the context of its being an onlooker in the process, she says.

Mustafa doubts whether a new government in Israel would necessarily diminish the conflict of interests.

"There are details. Maybe Netanyahu blocked the peace process, but this is not a problem of Netanyahu. It is a problem of the whole region," she says.

Mohammad Sid Ahmad, a widely read Al Ahram columnist, takes the rivalry paradigm even further, conjuring up images — at least for this reader — of a cold war between Israel and Egypt.

The two countries are already at loggerheads in a competition for primacy, he believes.

"Israel considers such a role to be indispensable for its survival," Sid Ahmad wrote in the paper. "Hence its determination to maintain a military capability superior to that of all the Arab states combined."

"For Egypt, which, with a population approaching 70 million, cannot live within the confines of the Nile Valley, a leading role in its Arab environment is imperative."

In order for Egypt to enjoy prestige, he adds, it must demonstrate "that it can prevent Israel from taking any steps that any Arab party would see as detrimental to its interests. With many states in the region still questioning the validity of the peace option, rivalry could well come to take precedence over partnership in Egyptian-Israeli relations."

On the other hand, notes Mustafa, Egypt's relations with the U.S. and wide-ranging aversion to renewed hostility with Israel will act as supports for the peace treaty and relations with Israel.

"I don't think Egypt is ready to even think about entering a war with Israel, and it is very difficult to convince a large segment of society to enter war," she says. "Egypt's domestic strategy of economic reform hinges on stability and attracting foreign investment, making it impossible to even make slogans (about war)."

But, given the regional factors and popular animosity towards Israel, the future of the Israeli-Egyptian relationship will be one of "stagnation," Mustafa predicts. If a random survey offers any indication, public opinion is divided into two groups: a majority that backs the idea of peace but is deeply dismayed by

Israeli behaviour, especially what they regard as continued occupation of Palestinian territories, and a minority that believes there can be no accommodation with Israel.

At Cairo University, a call on women to wear the hijab head covering and pictures of the Dome of the Rock are the two most popular posters. Students chat between classes while a muezzin makes the call to prayer from a campus mosque.

"To have the peace is positive, but it is not a relationship of cooperation," says Ahmad Masri, 18, a law student. "The Israelis think of themselves as a great power and act accordingly, with a policy of force."

"What Netanyahu does to the Palestinians is repugnant. The Palestinians are Arabs, we have brotherly and religious ties with them and we as Egyptians refuse to accept how they are treated."

"If Israel continues like this, we will have relations only on paper," continues Masri. "But if Israel is peaceful, we will have cooperation. People don't want the treaty cancelled. We want Israel's behaviour to change."

Dalila Bakri, sitting with her husband and son in a cafe, terms the treaty "a big disappointment."

"We thought the Israelis were interested in peace like us," she says, "but we see how they continue their settlements, break their agreements, don't allow freedom and continue the pressure on the Palestinians."

"They can't free themselves from dogma. Their behaviour has become even more repressive than in the past. The Arabs have given lots of concessions with almost no reciprocity. This peace will never be natural unless the Palestinian issue is resolved, and the Jerusalem issue is solved for Muslims and Christians," she adds. "I would not call this a cold peace. It is a temporary peace because nothing is indefinite unless you really nurture it."

Sharif Shinawi, 16, says he is pinning his hopes on a Labour victory in the May 17 elections. He terms the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin "a good man who believed in peace and imple-

mented it."

"Today there is no problem between Israel and Egypt," says Shinawi, whose father, a pilot bombed the Bar-Lev Line during the Yom Kippur War. "But Israel has to solve its problems with Palestine, Syria and Iraq."

A friend standing next to him offers another perspective: "Israel should be destroyed."

Nadir Tahawi, 15, says he chats with Israelis on the Internet, telling them they are welcome to visit. But, he adds, "What Israel is doing now in [south] Lebanon is something like terrorism. And they have to leave Palestine; it's not their land."

For their part, the government-affiliated media and officials continue to deploy an often confrontational approach towards Israel.

When Israel announced recently that it would not be supplying Jordan with the amount of water required by the peace treaty, October magazine, which is closely identified with the regime, termed it "the start of a water war in the region."

Government publications have also given prominence to stories — invented, according to Israeli diplomats — of rebuffs to Israeli requests to participate in international fairs and events.

The approach, according to one Egyptian commentator, can be explained by a perceived need for an external enemy as a reason to avoid power-sharing. "With peace, it is difficult to say we can't democratise because of war. So the implicit message is we still have an enemy and a national issue of which Palestine is the heart."

The lack of progress with the Palestinians gives Arab regimes added fuel for keeping up the discourse of confrontation, says the commentator.

At the same time, there is a fear that changing the tone towards Israel could spell trouble with the radical opposition, be it Islamic or Arab nationalist, which would then portray the government as betraying the Arab and Islamic cause.

Undaunted by the animosity towards Israel, the Egyptian top negotiator of the treaty, former Prime Minister Mustafa Khalil,

argues that the future of relations can be one of close cooperation.

Sitting in his office in the Arab International Bank, which he chairs, puffing on a cigar, Khalil is reproachful of Netanyahu's suspension of the Wye agreement, but says he sees enormous potential in economic ties.

"If you look to the future of the Middle East, you can compare it to what happened in the European Union where people always say Germany and France were the locomotives of union. I am saying that Egypt and Israel and Egypt can be the locomotives for the Middle East."

Khalil says the basis for cooperation has increased with Israel's shift into high technology, taking it out of a position of competition with Arab exports of agricultural materials.

He envisions a situation in which Egypt would participate together with Israel in producing high-tech goods, garments and other items; there would be plants in both countries. The jointly produced goods could be exported throughout the region, says Khalil.

"I think there is in the future a very big market for all of us," he says. "I thought that back in 1979 and yes, that was part of my motivation [for negotiating the treaty]."

Khalil continues to take pride in the treaty, saying it served as an example for other Arab peace agreements with Israel. Despite all its difficulties, the peace process has made gains over the years, he says.

"The idea was to live in peace and not think about the next war, and not to keep on struggling without achieving anything. This was not an easy thing [for people] to accept but [the treaty] undoubtedly laid foundations for the future of the Middle East. That's how I saw it. I still see it that way," says Khalil.

Outside, a 28-year-old social worker pays a more modest tribute to the bandwork of Sadat and Khalil: "We have no wars now and people aren't dying."

Wild boars wreak havoc in the south of France

AUPS, France (AP) — The good news across France is that hunting for sanglier — the beloved wild boar — is terrific. Just about all other news related to those brazen pork barrels on the hoof ranges from bad to catastrophic.

"They're destroying everything, those beasts," grumbled Jeannot Romana, a farmer in Provence who much prefers his sanglier as chops and sausage.

"Wheat fields, fences, everything. It's a plague of pigs." In a single year, French authorities have paid \$20 million to indemnify farmers and growers for sanglier depredations, and that is only part of the damage.

From the Luberon to the Riviera, in southern France, home-owners report uninvited porcine families happily lounging by their swimming pools. Deep holes like bomb craters mar vegetable patches and flower beds.

Perhaps the worst news comes from Aups, a mountain town dating back to the Romans, due north of Saint-Tropez. Wild pigs, breaking an age-old balance of nature, are eating up the truffles.

Of all the delicacies in a country addicted to exotic edibles, nothing ranks with those "black diamonds," lumps of fungus that under the right conditions grow on the roots of truffle oaks and lindens.

In the good old days, truffle gatherers used domestic pigs to find their treasure, quickly substituting an acorn as a reward before the pig could gobble up the profit. Sangliers left truffles alone.

When too much hunting caused a population crash among sangliers a decade ago, however, hunters sent domestic sows into the woods to breed with wild boars. Numbers shot up. But the hybrids loved truffles.

A parched summer not only hampered the truffle crop, gatherers report, but also killed off many plants that feed sangliers. The boars were forced to dig deep — for truffles or anything else they could find.

The National Hunting Office estimates the French sanglier population at 700,000, nine times the total 25 years ago, despite a kill of 322,000 in 1997 and an even greater number — still not tallied — in 1998.

"They tear up vineyards, gardens, crops, and you can't keep them out," said Yves Creissac, a vintner near Montpellier, 250 miles west of Aups. "They charge an electric fence and knock it over before it stops them." He blames hunters for destroying a natural balance. A pure sanglier female had one litter a year of perhaps three piglets, but hybrids can reproduce twice a

year, with up to 20 babies in all, he said.

"It's been a disaster, and it is getting worse," Creissac said. "These animals look just like sangliers, but they're different, much bolder, much less fearful of man."

Hunters agree the numbers are up, but not many are happy to shoulder all the blame.

Yves Merino, whose Grand Café du Cours at Aups displays a mounted sanglier wearing Elton John sunglasses and Christmas bulbs, said his club shot 125 boar last year, easily beating the previous record, 80 in 1997.

If anyone messed around with the sangliers' mating habits, it wasn't him or his buddies, Merino said. And, he added, the damage reports are overwrought.

"Look, we pay indemnities to farmers who say they suffer damage from sangliers, so what do you expect?" he said. "They claim boars kill their sheep. Please. Wolves, maybe. Not boars." Sangliers are not known to be carnivorous. They just look like it. Brawnier, bigger and meaner looking than their southwestern U.S. relatives, javelinas, they attack humans only when threatened.

"We haven't substantiated cases of sanglier killing sheep, but they wreak havoc with agriculture," said Eric Tournier of the

National Hunting Office.

"They're smart, and they know how to get a meal." In France, the hunting office pays damages to farmers from funds collected in hunting permits. Seasonal sanglier licences vary from place to place, but the average cost is 250 francs, just under \$50.

"There are plenty of sangliers in the north of France, too, and their numbers are growing," said Florence Ferte, who hunts sanglier on horseback and follows the plight of game closely.

"Before, hunters could shoot them without a licence, and the numbers were kept in check," she said. "Now, a lot fewer are being taken."

For big game hunters, this is tragedy.

"Sanglier tend to colonise in one spot, scarifying off the other animals," Ferte said. "They used to migrate, but now with so many roads and fences, they gather in one spot and breed like crazy."

Recently, Ferte visited friends near Aix-en-Provence and found the luncheon party increased by six.

"Right there at the pool, a mother sanglier trotted up with her five babies following behind," she said, with a chuckle.

"They acted like they owned the place. My friends were not amused."

By Tony Munroe
Reuters

BOSTON — The patient flails wildly as it is lifted out of a blue plastic box and onto an examination table in the critical care ward at the New England aquarium.

The young sea turtle, with big, baleful eyes and a sharp beak, is named "Orange-Yellow" for the band that has fallen off its flipper. The patient is a Kemp's Ridley, the most endangered sea turtle species in the world.

In November it was found washed up on a Cape Cod beach in a near-death state of hypothermia known as "cold-stunned," one of dozens of rare young turtles stranded on the cape each winter, unable to migrate south when the waters turn cold.

"They're a lot easier (to handle) when they're cold-stunned," Kristen Patchett, a technician in the aquarium's rescue and rehabilitation unit, said.

Often they are severely dehydrated because they have stopped eating. Too weak to swim when they arrive at the aquarium, the sea turtles are kept out of the water in humid air. To keep them moist, a jelly is applied to their skin and ointment to their eyes. "It's basically the equivalent of a hospital bed," Patchett said of the treatment.

As cold-blooded reptiles, turtles' body temperatures are closely affected by their surroundings. Rescued turtles show up at the aquarium with body

Rare turtles battle to survive at New England aquarium

temperatures far below the desired 75 or 80 (24 or 27°C). Aquarium staffers warm them carefully over a few weeks because a quick temperature increase can further damage a turtle's organs.

Not a lot is known about sea turtles and scientists are not sure why they become stranded but migration, ocean currents and distribution patterns play a role, the aquarium says. Kemp's Ridleys summer in the fertile waters of Cape Cod Bay. Most, but not all, head south for the winter.

No one knows why some stay. "That's the question. We really don't know why they're staying," Patchett said.

Most of the stranded turtles are less than five-year old, although it is impossible to tell the age of a turtle accurately or how long they live. It is also very difficult to tell whether a sea turtle is a male or female, Patchett says.

The Kemp's Ridley, one of seven known species of sea turtle, can weigh up to 100 pounds (45 kg). Young "Orange-Yellow" weighed in at a just four pounds (1.9 kg) when it was found on South Sunken Meadow Beach in

Eastham, Massachusetts. It now weighs nearly seven pounds (3.1 kg).

Scientists do not know how long Kemp's Ridleys live but some speculate it can take decades before they are old enough to breed, said Bob Prescott, director of the Audubon Society's Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, which coordinates turtle rescues on cape beaches each winter.

Entanglement in fishing nets and poaching have devastated the Kemp's Ridley population. Trash on beaches and at sea can also be deadly to hungry turtles, Patchett says.

The population of Kemp's Ridleys has declined so steeply that females now lay their eggs on a single beach near Rancho Nuevo, Mexico.

Patchett says there are an estimated 3,000 nesting females left in a habitat that stretches from the gulf of Mexico to new England. In 1947 an estimated 47,000 females nested, the aquarium says.

But thanks to rescue efforts, there is still hope for endangered turtles. "Orange-Yellow" is now thriving and will soon be transferred to another aquarium in Florida and will be released into the wild this spring.

U.S. expansion turns eight, record length in sight

NEW YORK (R) — The U.S. economic expansion turns eight on April 1 and, barring an unexpected storm, will sail into the next millennium as the longest period of prosperity in American history.

The Clinton administration and Federal Reserve (Fed) Chairman Alan Greenspan already call it the longest "peacetime" expansion, just 10 months shy of the record-setting 1961-1969 stretch marked by the Vietnam war. Economies usually grow faster in war times as governments spend heavily and industry gears up to feed the war machine.

Commentators have groped for adjectives to best describe the rare mix of robust growth, low unemployment and subdued inflation that makes the United States, in Greenspan's words, an "oasis of prosperity" in a financially troubled world.

"The 1990s is the best decade of the century for the American economy, no doubt about it," said St. Louis Fed director of research Robert Rasche, who added he does not think healthy expansions must "die of old age."

Since April 1991, the expansion has created over 19 million jobs — enough to employ the entire population of Australia — while the U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) rose by about \$1.6 trillion, roughly the size of France's economy.

Meanwhile, American households' net worth surged nearly 80 per cent to more than \$36.0 trillion, thanks in part to a roaring U.S. stock market that propelled the Dow Jones industrial average from 2900 to 10000.

But the post-Gulf war expansion did not generate high

praise until 1996, when economic growth really took off and tight labour markets drew the long-term unemployed back to the work force.

The business cycle started on an austere note, with massive white-collar layoffs that earned it the nickname of a "jobless expansion" as corporate America focused on productivity and spent trillions of dollars on new technology and automation.

The U.S. had to work off the many excesses of the 1980s.

Households were saddled with mortgages bigger than their home equity, taxpayers had to pick up a \$150 billion tab for the thrift debacle and the U.S. federal budget deficit neared \$300 billion.

"What is amazing about this expansion is how stable it has become in recent years. In a way, the expansion took care of solving its balance sheet problems early on, and that is paying off now," said David Resler, managing director at Nomura Securities International. The Fed did its share early on to ensure that the frail expansion would not falter, halving the benchmark federal funds rate, which governs overnight inter-bank lending, from 6.0 per cent in April 1991 to 3.0 per cent in 1992.

Lower interest rates helped U.S. banks, corporations and consumers sort out their debt burdens. The government, meanwhile, embarked on drastic budget discipline that resulted in a \$70 billion surplus in 1998, the first in 29 years.

As the economy recovered, the Fed had to reverse its earlier monetary policy in 1994, with an aggressive tightening cycle that boosted interest rates to prevent inflation. "This may be the most important contribu-

don of the Fed to the expansion because it really changed people's minds about inflation. People no longer took it into account in their business plans," Nomura's Resler said.

But the preemptive strike was so aggressive that it threatened to undermine the expansion, prompted the Fed to relax credit in 1995, and fuelled a debate led by then-Fed Vice Chairman Alan Blinder about the cost-effectiveness of actively fighting further an already low inflation rate.

The Fed endorsed that view after Blinder left in 1996, raising the funds rate just once in 1997 and actually lowering it three times in 1998 to shield the U.S. economy from the global turmoil that has roiled emerging markets since mid-1997.

"We were willing to say the economy is working in a way that it has not worked before, that we, in fact, don't fully understand. But we are going to let it happen and that is very much our current stance," Federal Reserve Bank of New York President William McDonough explained last week.

The payoff has been a surprisingly robust economy over the past three years, with the unemployment rate holding below 5.0 per cent since July 1997 and growth averaging nearly 4.0 per cent — its pace through most of the third longest expansion in November 1982 through July 1990.

Americans remain confident the long-toothed expansion remains young. A recent University of Michigan survey showed U.S. consumers were upbeat about the next five years, expecting "the expansion to become a teenager" by 2004.

IMF agrees fresh billions to pull Russia from default brink

MOSCOW (AFP) — International Monetary Fund (IMF) Chief Michel Camdessus rode to Russia's fiscal rescue Monday, agreeing billions of dollars in fresh loans to help Moscow stave off all-out default on its foreign debt and avoid financial pariah status.

The deal, the second multi-billion dollar IMF bailout for Russia in a year, was struck after three-and-a-half hours of talks in the Russian capital between Camdessus and Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov.

Precise terms and conditions were not immediately available, but government sources said the fund would make \$4.8 billion (4.4 billion euros) available in four equal tranches.

Analysts hailed the accord which they said would give the cash-strapped Russian government some much-needed breathing space and boost Moscow's efforts to secure further vital debt rescheduling from its foreign creditors.

The new money will help balance Russia's hopelessly lopsided budget. The government admits it can only repay \$9.5 billion of the \$17.5 billion that mature this year. Some \$4.6 billion of that is owed to the IMF.

"We agreed to cooperate, agreed that a new loan will be offered to us, agreed that next week a top mission will come here which will complete the preparation of an (economic) document," Primakov said on RTR Television.

A senior IMF mission will arrive in Moscow next week to draft a programme to reflate Russia's ailing economy which will then be submitted to IMF chiefs in Washington for approval. The text "will provide the basis for an extension of financial support for Russia," a joint Camdessus-Primakov statement said.

Economists said they expected Russia and the fund to sign a formal agreement within two months.

The fund froze its aid last year when a financial storm triggered by an Aug. 17 ruble devaluation and internal debt market freeze tore through the Russian financial system, further hurting Moscow's crippled finances.

The outline accord was a feather in the premier's political cap, as speculation had been mounting in Moscow that President Boris Yeltsin could sack Primakov should

the premier fail to reach terms with the IMF.

Analysts said Monday's deal was above all political, pointing out that the IMF had significantly eased its original terms, notably a primary budget surplus of 3.5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP).

That triggered a fierce war of words between the fund and Russia's communist economy chief Yuri Maslyukov, who insisted this year's \$19.6 billion budget had already pared spending to the bone and noisily refused to cut social programmes further.

Monday's accord represents a personal victory for him, providing for a primary surplus of two per cent of GDP, a figure that excludes debt servicing payments.

"The IMF has backed-off in terms of the conditionality associated with new lending," said Philip Poole, director of Emerging Europe at ING Barings in London.

"That points to what is primarily a politically-motivated deal. The West sees it to be in its interests for the IMF to stay engaged, for the IMF to provide support to stop Russia slipping any further into the financial abyss," he added.

"It's a very difficult transitory political environment in Russia and it made no sense for the Group of Seven (most industrialised nations) to disengage or for the IMF to allow Russia to default on additional classes of debt," he said.

Experts said the IMF would insist that the cash was used to repay debts to the IMF, post-Soviet Paris Club (sovereign) debt and that there be no repeat of massive capital flight associated with last July's \$22 billion IMF-led package for Russia.

Alexei Zabolotin of Moscow's United Financial Group said he expected the two sides to sign a full deal by May. "Russia can wait until then, because no big fund debt repayments are due until that point," he said.

However, some analysts said even the relaxed primary surplus targets set by the IMF were "a pretty tall order" unless the government ran up wage arrears to state workers.

"It will give Russia some breathing space short-term," commented one Western banker. "But it's like giving a drug addict one more hit. It calms him down, but it doesn't cure him."

Exchange Rates

Thursday, 25-03-99

ACCESS 4646868

CURRENCY	UNIT	JO	US	UK	FR	DE	IT	ES	PT	GR	TR	IN	TH	MY	SG	JP	HK	US
JORDAN DINAR	1.0000	0.1888	0.1927	1.8780	1.8387	0.1945	2.3250	0.0077	0.7082									
BAHRAIN RIYAL	5.2977	1.0000	1.0000	9.8471	9.7411	1.0302	12.3546	1.0781	3.6745									
U.A.E. DIRHAM	5.1853	0.9785	1.0000	9.7454	9.5416	1.0091	12.0716	1.0781	3.5772									
KUWAIT DINAR	5.2525	1.0005	1.0025	1.0000	0.9791	1.0035	1.2552	0.1130	3.5851									
QATAR RIYAL	0.5439	0.1027	0.1048	1.0214	1.0000	0.1058	1.1563	1.0684	2.6412									
OMAN RIYAL	5.1427	0.9707	0.9910	9.8878	9.4589	1.0000	0.8835	1.0032	3.5851									
YEMEN DINAR	0.4298	0.0811	0.0828	0.8073	0.7904	0.0830	0.9360	1.1976	1.0029	2.4032								
EGYPT POUND	4.1538	0.8086	0.8276	8.0396	8.8508	1.1252	45.3511	4.4073	15.2235									
LIBANON LIRA	21.2147	4.0048	4.0882	38.8408	38.0079	4.2745	3.2857	0.2934	9.7000									
LIBANON DOLLAR	1.4124	0.2698	0.2722	2.6925	2.5971	0.2745	3.2857	0.2934	9.7000									
GERMAN MARK	0.8523	0.1628	0.1662	1.6184	1.5855	0.1677	2.0059	0.1791	3.5772									
GERMAN SWITZERLAND	2.5379	0.4790	0.4881	4.7850	4.6864	0.4935	5.9337	0.5712	1.8278									
FRANCE FRANC	5.5108	1.0055	1.0401	15.9833	15.6491	1.0550	6.6516	0.5820	2.2244									
JAPAN YEN	1.6702	0.3153	0.3219	3.1365	3.0710	0.3248	3.8653	0.3740	1.1976									
HOLLAND GUILDER	2.8593	0.5387	0.5510	5.3698	5.2575	0.5550	6.6516	0.5820	2.2244									
SWEDEN KRONA	11.6405	2.1973	2.2432	21.6607	21.4037	2.2835	27.0790	2.4183	9.2415									
ITALY LIRA	25.1234	4.7423	4.8414	47.1814	46.1950	4.8853	58.4437	5.2153	17.7874									
SPAIN PESA	52.3432	9.8803	10.0888	98.2997	96.2446	10.1782	121.1544	10.8741	37.0890									
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	2.2184	0.4189	0.4277	4.1850	4.0809	0.4316	5.1623	0.4611	1.5733									
NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR	4.2133	0.7855	0.8118	7.9125	7.7470	0.8193	9.8012	0.8753	2.9832									
FINLAND MARKKA	7.9515	1.4419	1.4448	14.1114	13.8119	1.4681	17.4332	1.5851	5.2153									
CYPRUS POUND	17.5532	3.3700	3.4404	33.5281	32.6272	3.4716	41.5315	3.7024	12.6421									
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	1.2328	0.4028	0.4110	4.0053	3.9216	0.4147	4.9814	0.5241	1.6439									
CANADA DOLLAR	1.2974	0.2449	0.2500	2.4364	2.3855	0.2523	3.0180	0.2626	0.8785									
EURO																		

CURRENCY	UNIT	JO	US	UK	FR	DE	IT	ES	PT	GR	TR	IN	TH	MY	SG	JP	HK	US
US DOLLAR	1.0000	1.8580	0.5065	0.8636	0.1880	0.8457	0.4840	5.6227	1.3891									
GERMAN MARK	0.9105	1.0000	0.3388	0.4174	0.1013	0.5163	0.3016	3.4322	0.9647									
SWITZERLAND FRANC	1.7898	2.3432	1.0000	1.2283	0.2882	1.5195	0.8876	10.1015	1.5662									
GERMAN SWITZERLAND	1.4828	2.3881	0.8141	1.0000	0.2428	1.2370	0.7226	8.2338	1.5398									
FRANCE FRANC	0.8257	0.8701	0.3336	0.4180	1.0000	0.5087	0.2955	3.3157	0.9571									
JAPAN YEN	118.2500	183.8885	65.8114	80.6381	19.6243	1.0000	58.4124	664.7954	170.7584									
HOLLAND GUILDER	2.0244	3.3160	1.1287	1.3498	0.3360	1.7122	1.0000	11.3811	7.7241									
FINLAND MARKKA	13.4619	21.8609	4.2858	5.6341	1.3577	6.9896	4.0711	46.3324	1.5733									
ITALY LIRA	17.7574	29.1358	9.8885	12.1598	2.9519	15.0422	8.7865	1.0000	1.3261									
SPAIN PESA	37.0890	60.7028	20.6250	26.3343	8.1502	31.3395	18.3082	208.3441	42.1461									
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	1.5713	2.5738	0.8745	1.0742	0.2808	1.3288	0.7752	8.8161	2.7241									
NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR	2.9832	4.8862	1.6922	2.0292	0.4950	2.3229	1.4735	18.7703	2.1478									
CYPRUS POUND	0.5521	0.8716	0.2981	0.3638	0.0883	0.4550	0.2523	2.9814	0.9793									
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	12.6401	20.7045	7.0348	8.8410	2.0377	10.6893	6.2439	71.0621	2.7813									
CANADA DOLLAR	1.5100	2.4734	0.8404	1.0822	0.2506	1.2770	0.7459	8.4532	1.6439									
EURO	0.9185	1.5045	0.5112	0.8278	0.1824	0.7788	0.4837	5.1539	1.3222									

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR

NOTE: NEITHER ACCESS NOR THE PUBLISHER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY ERRORS OR MISTAKES

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Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Arabian Steel Pipes Manufacturing Company distributing dividends at a rate of 10%

THE GENERAL assembly of the Arabian Steel Pipes Manufacturing Company has approved the distribution of dividends at a rate of 10 per cent after reviewing the company's financial statement for 1998. The firm generated JD777,800 net profit last year compared to JD780,900 in 1997.

The company's annual report said a total of 12,095 tonnes of pipes were produced in 1998, 16.5 per cent less than the 14,481 tonnes produced in 1997. Sales totalled 13,428 tonnes for a gross amount of JD6.9 million, 20 per cent of which were earnings from exports. 1998 sales were four per cent less than the JD7.2 million of sales posted in 1997.

Jordan French Insurance Company eyes distributing half-a-share free bonus in the future

NUMERICALLY, it could have been possible to distribute dividends at a rate of 25 per cent but by distributing 20 per cent and replenishing the special reserve, along with the voluntary reserve, to about JD1.1 million would make it possible to distribute half a share bonus against each share," said Sharif Jamil Ben Nasser, board chairman of the Jordan French Insurance Company. He noted that the company's general assembly that the half-a-share bonus "is a futuristic outlook that is highly desirable and needed."

Ben Nasser indicated that the net profit generated by all insurance sections amounted to JD771,175 in 1998 compared to JD781,696 in 1997. The net profit for the life insurance stood at JD112,600 compared to JD130,000 in 1997 while the highest amount came from "outside agencies" which recorded a JD418,900 net profit (JD410,100 in 1997). The fire, transportation risk and vehicles insurance sections also posted net profits although the amounts were lower. Fire, JD90,700 (JD116,000 in 1997); transportation risk, JD63,400 (JD67,300); vehicles, JD74,000 (JD45,300). General accidents came last with

JD11,300 (JD12,300). The annual report showed net income before taxes and various allocations at JD919,700 at the end of last year compared to JD927,400 at the end of 1997. The net income after taxes and allocations amounted to JD728,600 compared to JD763,300. Total profit was shown at JD789,900 (JD796,800 in 1997). Other financial results indicated that total liabilities and shareholders equity increased from JD9.2 million at the end of 1997 to JD10.1 million at the end of 1998. Shareholders equity alone rose from JD3.6 million to JD3.9 million. Ben Nasser highlighted the rise in net investments in shares of companies as they increased from JD575,000 in 1997 to JD699,000 at the end of last year. He pointed out that the company generated JD607,411 of cash from its operational activities compared to JD688,931 in 1997.

In conclusion, Ben Nasser told the shareholders that the liquidation of the company's branches in the United Arab Emirates was nearly completed and only releasing the remainder of the company's deposit is still remaining (AI Dostour + AI Aswaq + AI Arab Al Yawm + AI Ra'i).

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, MARCH 30, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Make sure you get the instructions right so you don't have to do a job over because of a silly misunderstanding. That will be happening all over the place, not only to you. Besides being clear yourself, repeat back what other people say to make sure you've heard right. Ask them to do that for you, too. Better safe than sorry.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You're the perfect friend to have when somebody is nervous or upset. That's why so many of them come to you for guidance and support. That could happen again, real soon. Advise today's nervous Nelly to be patient and not to jump to conclusions.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Confusion in your work-place could be upsetting your routine at home. Try not to let that happen. The more stability you can maintain in your life, the easier it will be to take on more projects. This is your natural tendency anyway. That's how you get yourself into these messes.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) Think twice before travelling far today. Looks like you might find what you need closer to home. You'd have to add the expense of the journey, of course, and that might eat up all your profits. It looks like quick action is required, but stability is much more important.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) Think twice before risking your money today. Looks like a long shot is not a good risk. For one thing, what you see and what you get may be two different things. You'd make a better investment if you spent the money on your own education, especially right now.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) You and your partner probably ought to talk today about money, especially jointly held finances. Looks like there's going to be an opportunity to spend, and you need to do it wisely. You could make a pretty good deal, but it won't happen by accident. You'll need a structure to make your goals happen.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Today you may feel compelled to get everything done perfectly. You just want to be complete. It's a noble feeling, but not always one you can carry through. Sometimes being complete means accepting things the way they are; you may have to adopt that Zen-like attitude now, so you can stop worrying and get back in action.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) If you've been making a lot of big claims lately, today you could have your bluff called. Somebody might ask you to prove you can do what you say you can. Well, truth is, you probably understated your abilities, so this might not be much of a competition. You just have to strut your stuff every once in a while.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Structure and routines are important, of course, but you don't want to get locked in a box. Today you can make sure that doesn't happen by speaking up. Your input is important, of course. You can see things the others are missing, and that's especially true right now. Don't just sit there. Speak your mind.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) OK, so something you try today doesn't work. Don't fret or make a big deal out of it, because you're really quite lucky right now. If you brood over the one little item that got botched up, you might miss all the other magnificent things that are happening around you. That would be a real pity.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Put up with a critical analyst a little while longer. This person thinks he or she is doing you a favour by pointing out whatever you've done wrong, even if it's not really wrong. Some of what this person points out are simply your innovations, but this is really for the good. As you explain them, you'll understand them better yourself.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You've had enough of putting in corrections and doing everything just right. It's time for you to do something fun, like go shopping. You can probably afford it by now, and you know what you like to do in a situation like this — buy presents for other people. Get something nice for yourself while you're at it.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

Teenager steals to play the market

SYDNEY (AFP) — A 17-year-old boy wrote out more than four million dollars (\$2.4 million) worth of dud cheques to trade on the Australian stock market, a Sydney children's court was told. However, only \$5,000 dollars (\$53,000) was cleared before the boy was apprehended. The high school student, now 18, pleaded guilty to nine counts of obtaining money by deception in 1998. The then 17-year-old had set up two companies, asking an 18-year-old friend to be the company secretary and director. The youth opened two accounts, each with 15 dollars (\$9.50), and over a few months traded shares and wrote out a number of personal cheques. The youth also deposited a personal cheque in his father's Visa credit card account, drew uncles funds and spent 40,000 dollars (\$25,200) on purchases over the phone and Internet. His lawyer, Jim Conomos, told the court his client had no money and was "a very bright man."

"He has a problem, he knows how to obtain money in the system," Conomos said. "He gambled it away and he played for high stakes."

COMPANY	OPEN	CLOSE	CHANGE
BANKS			
ARAB BK	220.000	220.000	0.00%
NTL BK	1.420	1.420	0.00%
BK OF JORDAN	1.280	1.280	-1.50%
MIDDLE EAST BK	0.940	0.950	+1.06%
INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK	1.380	1.440	+4.35%
THE HOUSING BK	2.780	2.860	+2.51%
JO. KUWAIT BK	1.570	1.560	-0.64%
JO. GULF BK	0.650	0.650	0.00%
JO. ISLAMIC BK	1.670	1.670	0.00%
UNION BK	0.590	1.040	+5.05%
INVEST. AFR. BK	1.300	1.330	+2.31%
BEST ELIM	0.630	0.590	-6.35%
PHILADELPHIA BK	0.520	0.520	0.00%
BANKS INDEX	286.340	POINT +	+0.34%
INSURANCE			
JO. INS	2.900	2.850	-1.72%
MIDDLE EAST INS	3.450	3.450	0.00%
JO. FRENCH INS	2.700	2.450	-9.26%
INSURANCE INDEX	124.400	POINT +	-1.80%
SERVICES			
ELECTRIC POWER	1.640	1.650	+0.61%
ARAB ELECTRICITY	1.920	1.820	-5.21%
ARAB INTL. HOTELS	4.740	4.740	0.00%
PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	0.920	0.980	+6.52%
JO. INTL. TRADING CENT	0.230	0.240	+4.35%
AL-RAY	7.060	7.130	+1.01%
AL-AMMOOD	0.990	1.070	+8.09%
AL-JARDA FOR EDU	0.990	0.970	-2.02%
ARAB INTL. FOR INVS. & EDU	1.950	1.930	-1.03%
UNIFIED LAND TRANS	1.020	1.050	+2.94%
UNITED FOR FINANCIAL INVS	1.080	1.080	0.00%
SERVICES INDEX	111.690	POINT +	+0.19%
INDUSTRY			
CEMENT	3.640	3.640	0.00%
PHOSPHATE	2.290	2.380	+3.93%
ARAB POTASH	4.290	4.300	+0.23%
INDUSTRIAL REFINERY	10.650	11.200	+5.17%
THE IND. COM. & AGRIC	1.020	1.000	-1.96%
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL	2.890	3.080	+6.58%
CERAMIC IND	1.260	1.260	-0.76%
JO. DAIRY	2.960	2.960	0.00%
TOBACCO & CIGARET	1.470	1.450	-1.36%
JO. PAPER	1.060	1.030	-2.83%
ARAB CHEMICAL DETERGENT	7.300	7.450	+2.05%
NTL. STEEL	0.610	0.710	+16.39%
DAR AL DAWA	6.090	6.100	+0.16%
MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX	0.560	0.560	0.00%
JO. STEEL	0.990	1.010	+2.02%
ARAB ALUMINIUM	1.690	1.690	-1.19%
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	0.390	0.390	0.00%
PAPER CONVERTING	0.790	0.700	-11.40%
NTL. IND	0.350	0.350	0.00%
PETRO - CHEMICAL	0.290	0.290	-3.00%
CHEMICAL & VEGETABLE OIL	1.080	1.150	+6.48%
UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL	0.950	0.970	+2.11%
NTL. CABLE	0.510	0.510	0.00%
SULPHUR - CHEMICALS	0.420	0.400	-4.76%
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM	1.240	1.250	+0.81%
KAWTHER	0.410	0.410	+0.61%
AL-ZAY	1.280	1.220	-4.72%
UNION MODERN IND	0.580	0.570	-1.72%
FOOD FACTORIES	1.000	0.950	-5.00%
IND. RESOURCES	0.420	0.470	+11.90%
NEW CAPLES	0.580	0.570	-1.72%
NTL. ALUMINIUM	0.720	0.620	-13.89%
INDUSTRY INDEX	97.400	POINT +	+0.91%
PARALLEL			
EXPORT BK 757	0.930	0.940	+1.08%
JO. TRADING FACILITIES	0.410	0.430	+4.88%
CENTRAL SITING	0.690	0.330	-5.71%
JO. INTL. INS	0.690	0.690	0.00%
UNION INVS. CORP	0.830	0.800	-3.61%
ARAB FINANCIAL INVS	0.500	0.520	+4.00%
AL - EKHAL	0.850	0.860	+1.18%
ADVANCED PHAR	0.410	0.510	+24.39%
AL - SHARO	1.090	1.090	0.00%
MEDICAL APPLIANCES	0.480	0.450	-6.25%
AL DAWLH	0.690	0.710	+2.90%
ARAB INVESTORS	1.090	1.110	+1.83%
ARAB INTL. TRADE	0.190	0.190	0.00%
OPTICAL & AUDIAL	0.340	0.340	0.00%
CENTURY	1.170	1.180	+0.85%
NAMCO	0.150	0.170	+13.33%
TEXTILE & PLASTIC	0.290	0.270	-6.89%
MIDDLE EAST PHAR	0.600	0.620	+3.33%
UNION TOBACCO	2.420	2.450	+1.24%
AL - KAD	0.490	0.540	+10.20%
UNITED ENG. IND	0.210	0.220	+4.76%
NTL. CERAMIC	0.380	0.360	-5.26%
NTL. TEXTILE MANU	0.190	0.190	0.00%
NTL. POULTRY	0.530	0.460	-13.21%
NUTRI DAR	0.740	0.780	+5.41%
GRAND INDEX	182.71	POINT +	+0.48%

BP Amoco, ARCO oil discuss linking into new oil giant

LONDON (AFP) — BP Amoco of Britain said Monday that it is in takeover talks with Atlantic Richfield (ARCO), the seventh-biggest U.S. oil company, and analysts saw the deal as a bold step which could bring big cost savings.

Although the two companies confirmed in a statement that they were "in discussions concerning a possible combination transaction," they also underlined that "no definitive agreement has been reached."

Investors reacted positively to the news, driving BP Amoco shares up 53 pence, or 4.6 per cent, to 1,090 pence a share.

Analysts described the possible takeover of ARCO as a bold step with substantial cost savings, although there were also concerns that it might stretch BP Amoco, formed only last August in a takeover of Amoco by BP, too thin.

The Financial Times reported that BP Amoco was close to agreeing to pay about \$25 billion (27 billion euros) in shares for ARCO.

However, the newspaper stressed that "the prospective transaction could still hit problems even at this late stage."

On Sunday the electronic edition of the Wall Street Journal, quoting sources close to the companies, also referred to such a deal, saying that the value of the offer would be greater than the stock market capitalisation of ARCO of \$21 billion.

The Independent newspaper in London also reported that negotiations were at an advanced stage and noted that new entity would be capitalised at \$185 billion, bigger than Royal Dutch-Shell.

Annual sales would reach \$80 billion, with oil reserves of 13 billion barrels.

Analysts forecast potential cost savings of \$1 billion from the merger, including savings at Prudhoe Bay in Alaska, the largest North American oil reserve, where BP Amoco and ARCO share exploitation.

The deal would also give BP Amoco an entry into U.S. west coast refining.

"If they can manage to make the cost-savings, then the market will have to look at the deal quite positively," said one leading analyst, who declined to be named.

"There is no doubt that the cost savings benefits are very substantial, especially in Alaska," said another analyst.

Analysts warned that there might be regulatory pitfalls should the deal result in heavy job cuts, coming on top of the redundancies announced after the BP and Amoco tie-up.

However, an analyst at Credit Lyonnais Securities Europe, Jürgen Lunhof, said that "it's too early to tell about redundancy, but

there should not be that much duplication."

There was also concern about BP Amoco overstretching its management structure.

The influential Lex column in the Financial Times asked whether BP Amoco chief executive John Browne was "biting off more than he can chew?"

"If problems emerged elsewhere — say, if the oil price took a downward lurch — Sir John could find himself fighting on too many fronts."

A analyst said that "there has to be a risk that — even for BP Amoco — this is just a deal too far," but he added that "BP is obviously so confident of its management that it sees another deal as a fairly straightforward process."

BP's purchase of Amoco was concluded in December for \$48.2 billion, putting the new company in the top three oil companies, alongside Royal Dutch-Shell and Exxon-Mobil — although that merger must still win U.S. regulatory approval.

BP-Amoco has reported that in 1998 its net profits fell by 34 per cent to \$4.46 billion from sales which had fallen by 23 per cent to \$83.7 billion.

ARCO, which is based in Los Angeles, California, made net profits of \$452 million in 1998, down from \$1.77 billion in 1997 from sales which had fallen by 27 per cent to \$10.809 billion.

Investors give Nissan's deal with Renault muted reception

TOKYO (AFP) — Financial markets gave Nissan Motor Co. a poor reception Monday after a lifesaving deal tied the troubled Japanese carmaker's future to France's Renault SA.

Investors pushed Nissan's share price up only a modest three yen, or 0.6 per cent, to close at 468 yen on the Tokyo stock market.

Nissan President Yoshikazu Hanawa met automotive analysts in Tokyo to try and win support for the deal struck at the weekend with Renault, which created the world's fourth largest carmaker group.

But U.S. ratings agency Moody's Investors Service said it would keep Nissan's long-term debt on its junk bond "BA1" rating, warning there were potential difficulties in the deal.

Culturally the two firms could clash, it said, and noted Renault was not willing to give direct support to Nissan's creditors.

Renault agreed to spend 643 billion yen (\$5.4 billion) to take minority control of Nissan with a 36.8 per cent stake. Together the two carmakers will have an annual production of 4.8 million vehicles, becoming the world's fourth largest carmaker.

The French automaker will also take 22.5 per cent of Nissan's truck-making affiliate Nissan Diesel Motor Co. and buy Nissan's European financial subsidiaries.

Nissan has suffered from poor sales in crisis-stricken Asia, unpopular models in the U.S. market and a collapse in demand at home.

The firm is burdened with heavy debts, worth 2,500 trillion yen as of last March. The carmaker, number two in Japan, has warned it will take a 30-billion yen group net loss in the current financial year ending this month.

"The company continues to operate in an increasingly competitive environment and against competitors with substantially greater financial flexibility," Moody's said.

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Venus wins historic battle of sisters

KEY BISCAYNE (AFP)

— Venus Williams defeated younger sister Serena 6-1, 4-6, 6-4 here Sunday to win her second consecutive title at the Lipton Championships in the first major women's tennis final between sisters in over a century.

Not since Maud Watson defeated older sister Lilian to win the 1894 Wimbledon title had two sisters met for such a crown.

But this time the older sister took home a \$265,000 top prize at the \$4.775 million WTA tournament in addition to family bragging rights.

Venus Williams, the sixth seed, took one hour and 58 minutes to subdue Serena.

"It's difficult to play against your sister," Venus admitted as she accepted the championship trophy. "Serena is a great player. Of course, there's great satisfaction because she takes players down left and right. So to survive such an onslaught is just great."

"But whoever I play — I play to win."

The 18-year-old successfully defended her first WTA crown four weeks ago in Oklahoma City — the same day 17-year-old Serena beat French opponent Amelie Mauresmo in Paris for her first WTA title.

Serena, seeded 16th, entered Sunday's final brimming with confidence after a 16-match winning streak in quest of her third title in a month. She also won the Evert Cup two weeks ago.

Venus, who won her fifth career WTA crown, beat her sister in both prior WTA meetings in straight sets (at the Australian Open and Italian Open last year).

But even in defeat, Serena rose to a career-best 11th in the ATP rankings while Venus remained sixth.

"Now that I am playing more, I'm certain I will have another chance to play her again in a final," Serena said.

"I didn't consider her my sister. I considered her my opponent."

Richard Williams, the father and coach of both players, reflected upon how far his girls have come since their days on the mean streets of Compton, California, to the number-two and three spots on the 1999 WTA money list.

"We're used to being on the corner in Compton where people were shouting and doing drugs," he said.



Venus Williams (L) of the U.S. is congratulated by her sister Serena after her victory in the women's final match at the Lipton Tennis Championships on Key Biscayne, Florida. Venus won her second straight title by beating her sister 6-1, 4-6, 6-4 (AFP photo)



Venus Williams (L) of the U.S. holds the trophy after beating her sister Serena (R) in the women's final at the Lipton Tennis Championships (AFP photo)

"This is very strange to me sitting up here and have reporters talking to me. I actually feel like a fool."

At one point, Richard Williams left the match, saying: "I really thought I was going to cry. I felt too

ugly to be out there crying so I left."

Venus broke Serena to take a 5-4 lead in the final set and held serve to win. She met her younger sister at the net, gave her a high-five hand slap and put an

arm around her. "It's tough when you lose a match in the final," Venus said. "It's tough for anyone, no matter what happens. Serena wants to win. That's her personality."

South Korea in shock after beating Brazil

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korea on Monday basked in the glory of having beaten Brazil for the first time and coach Huh Jung-Moon insisted his side had now shown they could beat anyone.

A packed 68,000 crowd exploded into raptures after Kim Do-hoon scored the winner against the World No. 1 ranked team in the final minute of the match.

"Miracle," one sports daily said in the front page headline Monday. "Brazil beaten."

It may only have been a friendly international, but Huh insisted it was still a key result for the country as it prepares to co-host the 2002 World Cup finals with Japan.

The coach said the win over the world's best team had boosted players' confidence.

"I am very happy. The players put on a performance much better than I had expected. I was somewhat worried because seven of our players in Japan had only joined the training two days before," he told reporters.

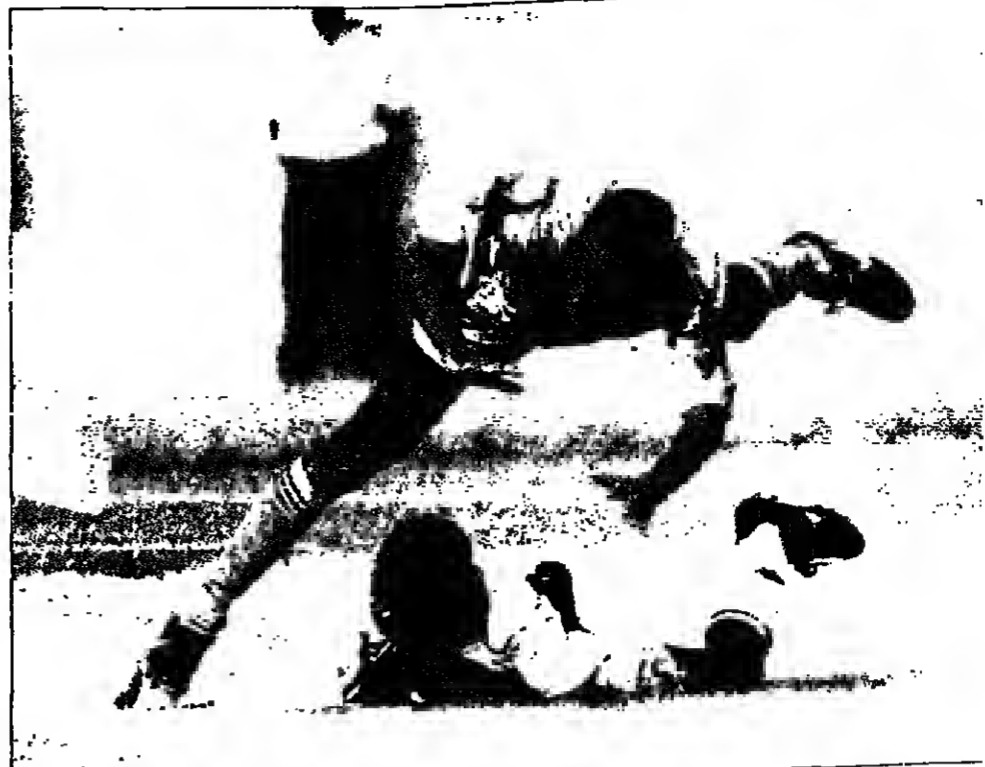
"The best thing we got out of this is that players now have the confidence that they can take on any team."

Goal hero Kim, who beaded in a cross from Choi Sung-Yong, could not believe he had secured the win.

"To think that I put the goal in. Beating Brazil seems like a dream," he said.

Though Brazil were without top striker Ronaldo, and brought in six new faces for their Asian tour, coach Wanderley Luxemburgo praised South Korea, saying they were "much stronger than expected."

Brazil play Japan on Wednesday in Tokyo.



A Gabonese FC 105 player flies over a player from the Ivory Coast team. Asec Mimosas in Abidjan during their African Soccer Championship match. The Ivorian team beat the Gabonese 3-1 (AFP photo)

Mixed fortunes for fairytale clubs of Africa

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — One dream survived and another died after a weekend of first-round drama in the three African club championships.

Mathare United, a club born amid the squalour of the highest East African slum, reached the second round of the Cup Winners Cup despite losing 3-2 to Bata Bullets in Malawi.

Royal Leopards, competing in the CAF Cup after each policeman in the tiny Southern Africa kingdom of Swaziland donated 10 dollars toward expenses, were overwhelmed 6-1 at home by Nkana of Zambia.

Mathare face Petro Atletico of Angola or Dragons of the Democratic Republic of Congo during May while Leopards must wonder how they lost 8-3

on aggregate after scoring the first two goals of the tie.

Captain Maurice Wambua was the hero of Mathare, scoring twice during the first half in Blantyre as his team defended a 2-0 first-leg lead against far more experienced opponents.

United were formed seven years ago by residents of a sprawling shantytown in the east of Nairobi where crime, prostitution and drug and alcohol abuse are rife.

Wambua doubles as head of the Mathare AIDS prevention programme and could not contain the tears when the final whistle blew at a packed Chichiri Stadium in Malawi.

"None of us dreamt of competing in Africa, never mind winning a cup tie. We have displayed great courage and determination

and our teamwork has been exemplary. That is why we won," he boasted.

The success of Mathare rescued an otherwise disastrous weekend for Kenya with champions AFC Leopards surprisingly losing at home to Rayon Sport of Rwanda while Mumias Sugar fell to Ferroviario of Mozambique in the CAF Cup.

Shocks were scarce with Champions League giants ASEC of Cote d'Ivoire and Raja Casablanca of Morocco overcoming first-leg deficits and the strongest Cup Winners Cup and CAF Cup contenders marched on.

Second-round matches will be staged over two legs from April 30 to May 16.

Lukic quits Metz to fight for country against NATO strikes

METZ (AFP) — Yugoslavian striker Vlatko Lukic announced on Monday he has quit French first division side Metz in protest at NATO air strikes against his country.

The striker, who scored four goals for his side in this season's French Champions League, said that he will return immediately to Serbia and fight for his country.

"What is being done to our country is scandalous," said Lukic. "So I'm leaving Metz to return to Yugoslavia."

"I have to do something. This is more important than sport. I made up my mind when the strikes began. When I'm in Serbia I'll do as all my countrymen. I'll offer my services to my country. I'm a citizen and like everyone else will conform to what I am expected to do."

"Serbia isn't the aggressor and is being attacked, no one will change our borders against our will."

Lukic added: "My family comes before

everything else in my heart. When I am home I will try to defend the children who are living locked up in bunkers instead of playing freely."

Lukic's contract with Metz, currently ranked 12th in the French league table, has been suspended until June 30. Club president Carlo Molinari said that he understood and respected Lukic's decision.

Yugoslavia's Football Union last week called on all their foreign-based players and coaches to boycott their teams because of NATO airstrikes launched against their homeland over the Kosovo crisis.

There are currently eight Yugoslavian footballers playing with French first division sides.

Greenpeace sues Sydney Olympic organisers

SYDNEY (AFP) — Environmental group Greenpeace took its fight over Sydney's "green" Olympics to court Monday, suing organisers over the air conditioning system at the 2000 Games' largest indoor venue.

But the case over the Olympic SuperDome's air conditioning was almost immediately adjourned by a Federal Court judge after lawyers for Olympic organisers said they planned to argue they were immune from prosecution. In its suit, Greenpeace claims the Olympic

Coordination Authority, the agency in charge of Games venues, is using ozone-depleting chemicals in the SuperDome's ventilation system.

That, the environmental watchdog argues, puts the agency in violation of Australia's Trade Practices Act, the legislation regulating the conduct of commerce in the country. However, lawyers for the Olympic Coordination Authority claim the body cannot be sued because it is not operating in trade or commerce, and that as a

state body it is also immune from prosecution. Justice Deirdre O'Connor adjourned a hearing Monday soon after lawyers for the Olympic body said they planned to make that case. She scheduled arguments on the issue for June 21. Greenpeace chief executive Ian Higgins told reporters after the hearing that the Olympic Coordination Authority's argument amounted to a claim that the government had the right to mislead Australians. "The Olympic Coordination Authority has got it wrong

and they won't admit to it," Higgins said. "It wants to claim immunity as a state authority and has argued it has the licence to mislead people."

The International Olympic Committee, he pointed out, was told at the time of Sydney's bid for the 2000 Games that no ozone-threatening chemicals would be used at Olympic venues. "The issue is simple," he said. "The environmental guidelines say ozone-depleting chemicals ... should not be used. The (authority) is refus-

ing to deal with the facts."

Greenpeace was involved in Sydney's bid for the 2000 Olympics and endorsed the proposal for a "Green Games", giving the bid an environmental legitimacy that helped boost its chances over rival Beijing.

But the environmental watchdog has fallen out with organisers in recent years and has been critical of preparations for the 2000 Olympics despite assurances from other environmentalists that the Games were set to be the "greenest" ever.

Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre						
CINEMA TEL: 463-4144 PHILADELPHIA '1' Tom Hanks & Edward Burns ...in SAVING PRIVATE RYAN Shows: 12:15, 3:15, 6:15, 9:15	CINEMA TEL: 463-4144 PHILADELPHIA '2' HAPPY EID TO ALL RONIN Shows: 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 A LITTLE PRINCESS Shows: 12:30, 3:30	CINEMA TEL: 569-9238 PLAZA Mil Gibson ... in LETHAL WEAPON Shows: 6:30, 8:30, 10:30 Jackie Chan & Chris Tucker...in RUSH HOUR Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 5:00	CINEMA TEL: 567-7420 CONCORDE ADWAD MAHROUS BTA' AL WAZIR Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 CONCORDE 2 MR. BEAN Shows: 2:00, 6:00 TOM & JERRY Shows: 12:30, 4:00	CINEMA TEL: 593-4793 GALLERIA 1 ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Jackie Chan & Chris Tucker...in RUSH HOUR Shows: 12:30, 3:30 THE MAGIC SWORD Shows: 5:00	CINEMA TEL: 593-4793 GALLERIA 2 ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Tom Hanks & Meg Ryan...in YOU'VE GOT M@IL Shows: 6:15, 8:30, 10:45 THE MAGIC SWORD Shows: 12:30, 3:30	Hisham Yanes Theatre TEL: 4625155 Starting on the Eid... the political satire AL SALAM AL Starting at 8:30 p.m.

Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

LOCAL SPORTS
SCENE

Zarqa to host bodybuilding championship

AMMAN — Five countries so far have announced their participation in the 7th Middle East Bodybuilding Championship, to be held by Zarqa Municipality in conjunction with the Jordan Bodybuilding Federation from April 27-May 1st. In addition to the UAE, Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan, the federation, which has invited 14 countries to take part in the event, expects 8 countries to announce their participation by April 20. Meanwhile, Jordan's bodybuilding champion Mustafa Hasanin, based in Austria, has confirmed his participation in the championship and said he will arrive in Amman on April 28.

Basketball federation dismisses coach

AMMAN — The Jordan Basketball Federation has dismissed the Bulgarian coach who was in charge of training the national team for three months because he failed in managing the team in Lebanon, where the players lost three matches and won another three. The JBF also decided to appoint Murad Barakat to supervise and train the team. Meanwhile, JBF Vice-President Yehia Bisheh has asked the Jordanian Olympic Committee to bring back the date of basketball event of the Pan-Arab Games — Al Hussein Tournaments, five days earlier as it coincides with the 20th Asian Championship for men in Japan, where four Arab teams including Jordan are expected to take part. The request came to make sure that the four teams will participate in both events.

Basketball team leaves for Qatar

AMMAN — The Kingdom's national basketball team left for Qatar on Tuesday to build a one-week training camp on an invitation from the Qatari federation. The team will play a number of friendlies against their Qatari counterparts, currently preparing for the Gulf Zone Asian qualifiers. Qatar is the fourth country where the team has a training camp after Lebanon, Greece and Chinese Taipei as part of preparations for the 9th Pan-Arab Games. The players are Hilal Barakat, Ashraf Samara, Husam Lutfi, Ma'en Odeh, Yousef Abu Baker, Al's Balbaisi, Musa Bashir Ayman De'abes, Nasser Bassam, Faysal Nsour, Fadi Saqqa, Mohammad Shmali and Ghazi Naber.

Kuwaiti volleyball team arrives Friday

AMMAN — The Kuwaiti volleyball team will arrive here on Friday to play three friendlies against its Jordanian counterpart as part of preparations for the Pan-Arab Games. Last week, the national volleyball team, which is scheduled to play the first match with Kuwait on Saturday, hosted its Iraqi counterpart, which won two out of three matches.



Seattle Supersonics Detlef Schrempf (L) grabs a rebound in front of Detroit Pistons Jerome Williams (C) and Jerry Stackhouse (R) during the first half in Auburn Hills, Michigan. The Pistons beat the Supersonics 104-87 (AFP photo)

Magic 1st in Atlantic Division

ORLANDO (R) — Darrell Armstrong put on an electrifying fourth-quarter performance on Sunday to lead the Orlando Magic into first place in the Atlantic Division.

Armstrong scored 19 of his 25 points in the fourth as the Magic rallied for a 94-87 victory over Miami that moved Orlando past the Heat to the top of the division.

"Darrell did his best imitation of a lightning rod," Magic coach Chuck Daly said of his reserve guard's heroics. Armstrong had a four-point play that gave the Magic the lead for good midway through the fourth and drained four clutch free throws in the final 18 seconds.

"Penny (Hardaway) got a little upset and he got on a couple of people, basically the whole team, and then all of a sudden it started clicking from there," Armstrong said. Whatever Hardaway did to fan the flames, Armstrong caught fire. He was a perfect 4-of-4 from the field and 9-of-9 from the line in the final period, scoring one less point than the entire Miami team over the final 12 minutes. "For those who said he couldn't play in this league, look who's laughing at who," fellow Magic guard Nick Anderson said of Armstrong.

Penny Hardaway scored 17 and Matt Harpring added 15 for Orlando.

Alonzo Mourning had 24 points and 15 boards to lead Miami. P.J. Brown added 23 and Tim Hardaway 21 for the Heat.

In Boston, Larry Bird, who led the Celtics to three NBA titles in the 1980s, improved to 6-0 coaching against his former team as the Indiana Pacers beat Boston 101-93.

"It's tough coming back here every time," Bird said. "Thank God we're in this building (FleetCenter) and not the Boston Garden. I honestly think if the garden was still standing I wouldn't go back and coach."

Indiana had six players score in double figures in a balanced attack led by Chris Mullin with 16 points. Mark Jackson with 15 and Reggie Miller's 14.

In Phoenix, Arvydas Sabonis hit a layup with 9.8 seconds left to lift the league-best Portland Trail Blazers (23-5) to an 88-86 triumph over the Suns for their sixth straight win.

Sabonis, Damon Stoudamire and Isaiah Rider finished with 18 points apiece to lead Portland, which saw Phoenix clip away at a 21-point Blazers lead after the first quarter. Phoenix had a chance to tie, but Tom

Gugliotta's shot at the buzzer was blocked by Rasheed Wallace.

Gugliotta paced the Suns with 18 points. At Los Angeles, Kobe Bryant scored 29 points and Shaquille O'Neal had 21 and sparked a late 11-4 run as the Lakers took an ill-tempered contest from the New York Knicks, 99-91. O'Neal gave Los Angeles an 80-75 lead with a thunderous dunk and former Knick Derek Harper sank consecutive 3-pointers down the stretch for the Lakers. Latrell Sprewell scored 15 of his 25 points in the fourth quarter and Patrick Ewing had 20 and 13 rebounds for New York.

In Sacramento, Hakeem Olajuwon scored 24 points to lead the Houston Rockets their eighth straight win, a 107-93 triumph over the Kings.

Scottie Pippen scored 17 points and Charles Barkley added 15 and 11 rebounds for Houston rookie Jason Williams scored 21 points to pace the Kings, who were without their leading scorer as Chris Webber missed the contest due to the flu.

At Detroit, Lindsey Hunter sparked a 22-5 first-quarter run as the Pistons pulled away early and coasted to a 104-87 rout of the Seattle Supersonics. Hunter scored nine of his game-high 20 points in the decisive run as the Pistons opened a 14-point lead after 12 minutes and increased it to 58-38 at the half.

In Charlotte, rookie Brad Miller scored 24 points off the bench to lead the Hornets to a 105-84 rout of the Cleveland Cavaliers for their eighth straight home win. David Wesley and Derrick Coleman keyed a pair of huge bursts in the third quarter, when the Hornets outscored the Cavs 32-10. Wesley scored eight of his nine in a 14-0 run and Coleman had six of his seven in a 15-3 spurt in the third. Wesley Person led Cleveland with 20 points.

In Toronto, rookie Vince Carter scored 22 points and Doug Christie added 20 to lead the Raptors to a 91-78 victory over the Chicago Bulls.

The Raptors reached the .500 mark at 14-14 with their eighth victory in 10 games to move one game behind Cleveland in the race for the final playoff berth in the East.

In Minnesota, Haywoode Workman had 19 points and eight assists and Glenn Robinson added 18 points to lead the Milwaukee Bucks to a 94-85 victory over the Timberwolves.

Japanese sponsor backs Sydney Games

SYDNEY (AFP) — Japanese sporting goods maker Mizuno will supply the equipment for baseball, softball and judo at the 2000 Olympics in a deal valued at nearly \$5 million (\$3.13 million) by Sydney Organising Committee (SOCOG) chief executive Sandy Hallway.

The benefits for SOCOG of the sponsorship deal, announced Monday, are split between cash and equipment.

The Japanese company will also provide the judo equipment for the Sydney Paralympics.

Mizuno President Masato Mizuno said the recent controversies surrounding the International Olympic Committee (IOC) did not dissuade his company from continuing an association with the Olympics which dates back to the Paris Games of 1924.

"We have no hesitation or doubt for the Olympic movement," he said, adding that he believed the IOC would be cleaner as a result of the reforms announced earlier this month at the session in Lausanne.

Hollway said last week that SOCOG still had to find another \$218 million to meet its sponsorship revenue target of \$874 million.

He declined to specify the exact value of today's deal, but said it was worth "a little less than \$5 million."

Orioles beat Cuban team 3-2

HAVANA (AFP) — Baseball diplomacy nearly backfired on the Baltimore Orioles, who needed an extra-inning rescue to subdue a Cuban all-star team in the first visit by a Major League Baseball team to the Communist nation since 1959.

Cuban President Fidel Castro was among an invitation-only crowd of 55,000 who watched Harold Baines single home Will Clark from third base in the 11th inning to give Baltimore a 3-2 triumph over Cuba in the historic matchup of political rivals.

No Major League club had played here since Los Angeles beat Cincinnati 3-1 four decades ago, about 2 1/2 months after Castro seized power. The United States government imposed a trade embargo shortly thereafter.

The Communist nation's talent, depleted by defections of top pitchers for rich Major League contracts, proved equal to the highest-paid club in the capitalist nation. Baltimore's \$82 million salary is up from \$74 million in 1998.

A victory by Cuba, the world's dominant Olympic and international team, could have been quite embarrassing for the Major League talent, long considered the world's best as well as highest paid.

Baltimore catcher Charles Johnson slammed a two-run homer off Cuban starter Jose Ibar with two outs in the second inning, but Cuba equalised on run-scoring singles by Roberquis Videaux in the seventh and Omar Linares in the eighth.

Cuban relief pitcher Jose Contreras struck out 10 Baltimore batters and allowed no runs and only two hits over eight innings. But Clark doubled off Cuban reliever Pedro Lazo and took third on Albert Belle's ground out to set up the winning hit.



Winning pitcher Mike Fetters (37) and other Baltimore Orioles players high five the Cuban baseball team after they played an exhibition game at the Latinoamericano Stadium in Havana. The Orioles won 3-2. It was the first time that a U.S. Major League team played in Cuba in 40 years (AFP photo)

The Cubans, using unfamiliar wooden bats rather than metal, lacked several top players competing in their national finals. The Orioles are in training for a new season set to open next week.

U.S. anti-Castro protesters argue the game, and a rematch May 3 in Baltimore, is a slap in the face to the Cuban people and legitimises the Castro regime. But U.S. and baseball officials want a common national pastime leads to more cultural exchanges.

"Our government believes this is a very important part of a cultural exchange between our two countries, a linchpin of that exchange," Major League commissioner Bud Selig said. "Because our government wanted to do it and it is an important part of our nations, we felt it was the right thing."

Despite difficulties arranging details of the visit and the unwillingness of U.S. umpires to work the game, more such meetings

are possible as early as next season, Orioles owner Peter Angelos said.

"It's my understanding two or three Major League teams have applied for a license to play Cuba as we have," he said. "I think other Major League teams will come. You will have even more contact among the Cuban people and U.S. people and eventually relations between the countries will improve."

"What I had in mind was to start bringing the people together despite political differences. As time goes on and people get together, those differences will fade and the people will get together as friends and neighbours."

Cuba equalised at 2-2 in the eighth inning when Jose Estrada doubled to left field and took third on a sacrifice bunt by Luis Ulaica. But Yobai Duenas grounded out and Baltimore ace Mike Timlin entered to face Cuban hero Linares.

The veteran third baseman, a star of Cuba's

Olympic championship teams, singled to left field to drive in Estrada with his first hit in four times at bat.

The Cubans pulled within 2-1 in the seventh when Videaux singled up the middle off Oriole starter Scott Erickson to score Ande Morales from second base.

Videaux followed his single by stealing second base but pinch hitters Eduardo Cardenas and Oscar Machado grounded out to end the threat.

Brady Anderson doubled to open the eighth but Contreras struck out Mike Bordick and walked Clark to face Belle, the power hitter he had struck out twice before. Contreras continued his mastery, forcing Belle into an inning-ending double play.

Cuba threatened in the first inning but Ulaica was thrown out trying to stretch a single into a double and Estrada was thrown out at home plate by shortstop Bordick trying to score from third base on an infield ground ball.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Austrian coach quits

VIENNA (AFP) — Austrian coach Herbert Prohaska quit on Monday following Saturday's Euro 2000 qualifier 9-0 hammering against Spain in Valencia. He made the announcement after meeting Monday with Austrian Football Federation President Beppo Mauehart. The 43-year-old took over as head of the Austrian team in 1993 after an international career with Austria Vienna, Inter Milan and AS Roma.

FIFA brings in BA for youth tourney

LAGOS (AFP) — FIFA, concerned about airline safety in Nigeria during the world youth soccer championship, has brought in two British Airways planes to help fly players around the country. The British carrier flew two of its Boeing 737s to Nigeria Saturday, a week ahead of the opening of the 10th FIFA World Youth Championship, after a request from contest organisers. The planes will supplement those being used by the cash-strapped Nigerian state-run airline Nigeria Airways, which is the competition's official carrier. The planes are to be jointly operated by BA and Nigeria Airways crews. British Airways has an association agreement with Nigeria Airways and has held talks with the airline over a longer-term agreement. More than 400 Under-20 soccer players are due in Nigeria in coming days for the FIFA organised championship, being staged in the African country for the first time. Several English football clubs have expressed reservations about the safety of organising the event in Nigeria.

Spain's Martin wins Casablanca Open

CASABLANCA (AFP) — Spain's Alberto Martin captured his first ATP Tour singles title Sunday, winning the \$215,000 Casablanca Open with a 6-3, 6-4 final win over compatriot Fernando Vicente — and predicted more Spanish gold in the 1999 season. The 20-year-old Barcelona-born Martin, ranked 94th in the world and who — like most Spanish players — lists clay as his preferred surface, saw off Vicente, two years his elder and the world number 54 in an hour and 18 minutes. Vicente crumbled after losing his opening serve to go 2-0 down in the opener as Martin streaked away with the match. "I'm very happy to have won my first title. It hasn't sunk in yet. This will give me so much confidence for the rest of the season," said Martin. "I think I will be just the first of many other Spanish winners this year." Neither man had dropped a set on the way to what was the first Tour final for them both. Martin, who beat promising qualifier and fellow Spaniard Juan-Carlos Ferrero in the semi-final, of Spain, adapted far more easily than Vicente to the surface at the Al Amal complex, which had become increasingly heavy because of rain.



World No. 1 Pete Sampras

Sampras keeps slight lead atop ATP rankings

PARIS (AFP) — Leading ATP Tour men's tennis rankings issued on Monday:

1. Pete Sampras (USA)	3525pts
2. Carlos Moya (Spa)	3516
3. Yevgeny Kafelnikov (Rus)	3382
4. Richard Krajicek (Ned)	3119
5. Patrick Rafter (Aus)	3115
6. Alex Corretja (Spa)	3101
7. Tim Henman (Gbr)	2633
8. Todd Martin (USA)	2279
9. Mark Philippoussis (Aus)	2264
10. Karol Kucera (Svk)	2253
11. Greg Rusedski (Gbr)	2126
12. Andre Agassi (USA)	2071
13. Marcelo Rios (Chi)	2035
14. Goran Ivanisevic (Cro)	1929
15. Thomas Enqvist (Swe)	1896
16. Albert Costa (Spa)	1800
17. Thomas Johansson (Swe)	1614
18. Gustavo Kuerten (Bra)	1608
19. Tommy Haas (Ger)	1600
20. Felix Mantilla (Spa)	1589
21. Cedric Pioline (Fra)	1520
22. Francisco Clavet (Spa)	1450
23. Marat Safin (Rus)	1254
24. Thomas Muster (Aut)	1224
25. Jerome Golmard (Fra)	1210
26. Nicolas Kiefer (Ger)	1198
27. Marc Rosset (Swi)	1181
28. Alberto Berasategui (Spa)	1167
29. Byron Black (Zim)	1164
30. Wayne Ferreira (Rsa)	1161

SAVE
WATER ...
EVERY
DROP
COUNTS!

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
& TAMMAM HIRSHI
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WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q1 - As South, vulnerable, you hold: A A K J 6 5 7 7 6 K J 3 2 A 9	Q4 - As South, vulnerable, you hold: A Q J 5 7 A 10 5 5 Q J 9 5 2 A K 10 6
The bidding has proceeded: SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST 1a Pass Pass 2a Pass Pass 2b Pass 2a Pass Pass What do you bid now?	Partner opens the bidding with one club. What do you respond? Q5 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold: A K Q J 7 5 4 A K 8 6 5 A 8 5 4
Q2 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold: A A K 8 6 2 7 K Q 9 8 A Q 6 A 6	The bidding has proceeded: SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST 1a Pass 2a Pass 3a Pass What do you bid now?
The bidding has proceeded: SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST 1a Pass 2a Pass 3a Pass What action do you take?	Q6 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold: A 10 6 7 A Q A 9 8 6 A K 8 5 4 2
Q3 - As South, vulnerable, you hold: A Q J 7 6 2 7 6 5 4 A K 8 5 2 A 10 6 3	The bidding has proceeded: EAST SOUTH WEST NORTH 1a Pass 2a Pass 3a Pass Partner opens the bidding with one heart. What do you respond?

Khatami puts off trip to France amid reports of wine row

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian President Mohammad Khatami has put off a ground-breaking visit to Paris next month because of what French press reports said Monday was a diplomatic wrangle over wine.

"President Khatami's trip to France cannot take place at that time because the two parties have not been able to reach agreement on the programme for the visit," the president's office said in a statement.

French newspaper Liberation reported that Iranian diplomats had been insisting that Khatami, who had been due to visit Paris on April 12, could not sit down for dinner with President Jacques Chirac if wine was served.

The French had refused to back down on the grounds that it was international protocol for foreign guests to adapt to the culture of the host country.

The Iranian statement indicated that protocol issues were behind the decision to postpone the visit, but there was no immediate official confirmation that the controversy over wine was responsible.

"Islamic codes are clear and are normally respected during President Khatami's visits as Iranian head of state and pres-

ident of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference," Khatami's office said in the statement which was broadcast on state radio.

"French officials were informed of that and the trip cannot take place on the planned date without an agreement on the issue between the two parties," it said.

Alcohol is banned in the Islamic republic.

The Iranian statement gave no new date for the visit, but attempted to downplay the incident, underlining Tehran's "determination to improve its international relations and in particular deepen the friendly and historic ties between Iran and France."

Khatami, a moderate who took power in August 1997 and pledged to improve ties with the outside world, would be the first Iranian head of state to go to France since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

The planned visit had sparked demonstrations by members of Iranian opposition groups in several European capitals.

Earlier this month Khatami made a similar landmark visit to Italy where he met Pope John Paul II as well as political leaders.

In a statement received in Nicosia, the main armed

Iranian opposition group the People's Mujahadeen said the real reason for the cancellation was "fear of protests and demonstrations organised by the Iranian resistance and a repetition of the dismal failure of his trip to Italy."

Khatami's three-day visit to Italy, the first by an Iranian head of state to western Europe since 1979, was occasionally marred by Iranian opposition protesters who threw paint-filled eggs on his car and held demonstrations.

Chirac invited Khatami to France when Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi visited Paris in February, and the two governments breathed new life into bilateral ties with an array of cultural and diplomatic agreements.

France is by far the highest investor in Iran's oil and gas industry despite unilateral U.S. sanctions aimed at blocking major investment in the sector.

On the trade front, France ranks as Iran's fifth partner behind Germany, the United Arab Emirates, Japan and Italy, exporting goods worth around \$750 million to the Islamic republic in 1997.

France buys around \$870 million worth of oil from Iran each year, its fourth largest supplier of crude.



BEGGING IN HAJ: Muslim pilgrims pass by a woman begging in her black Islamic dress on the Jamarat bridge during the last day of Haj in Mina on Monday. The Haj is the annual pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina that all able-bodied Muslims are required to do once in a lifetime if they can afford it (AP photo)

Saudi Arabia declares pilgrimage safe and clean

MECCA (R) — Saudi Arabia on Monday declared this year's Muslim Haj pilgrimage safe, clean and free of infectious diseases and tragedies as thousands of pilgrims prepared to return home.

Pilgrims performed the symbolic stoning of the devil on the third and final day of the ritual before heading back to the Holy City of Mecca on their way home.

"It gives me great pleasure on the occasion of the end of the Haj season and after the pilgrims completed their rituals, to declare that the Haj for this year was safe and clean, thanks be to God," Health Minister Osama Ben Abdul Majid Shobokshi said in a statement.

He said the pilgrimage was "free from epidemics and

infectious diseases and that the pilgrims' health in general was reassuring."

Saudi media had said a small fire that gutted about 40 makeshift tents at the Mina plain and hurt 12 people on Saturday night was the only accident that marred Haj this year.

In 1997, some 343 people died in a fire that swept through thousands of tents in Mina. Saudi authorities have since banned stoves in the camps and erected thousands of fireproof tents.

Saudi officials had said some 1.7 million pilgrims from over 100 countries performed Haj, one of the five pillars of Islam, this year.

Television showed waves of pilgrims throwing stones at three stone pillars symbolising the devil from a bridge

which had been erected for that purpose.

The bridge was the scene of a stampede last year in which 119 people, including some Saudi policemen, were killed.

Saudi authorities had made efforts to prevent the recurrence of the tragedy, such as making the bridge one-way.

The official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) said police were deployed to direct people out of the stoning area, and large billboards with instructions in 10 languages guided pilgrims.

Ibrahim Al Bega'i, a pilgrim from Lebanon, said: "It was really crowded, but nevertheless organised. All the people stoned the pillars and moved on smoothly."

Pilgrims then began heading back to Mecca for the ritual

circling of the Kaaba.

Saudi authorities had issued instructions to travel agencies to start ferrying pilgrims home from Monday. Pilgrims who had not visited the City of Medina before were given 11 days to do so.

Meanwhile, Saudi authorities began distributing meat from more than 400,000 sacrificial animals slaughtered at the pilgrimage to poor people.

SPA said 31 tonnes of meat were flown to Pakistan on Sunday for distribution to Afghan refugees in the country.

The agency said up to 271,000 sacrificial animals would be distributed to needy people in 26 countries.

Ousting Iraqi regime best way to contain Iran — Indyk

DUBAI (AFP) — The United States sees Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's overthrow as the best way to contain a growing military threat from Iran, a senior U.S. official said in an interview published on Monday.

"Iran represents a threat to the Emirates and other countries of the Gulf, and we take this threat seriously," Marlin Indyk, U.S. assistant secretary of state for the Middle East, told the London-based Arabic daily Al Hayat.

"The best way to face up to this problem, which will worsen with the development of Iran's capacity in weapons of mass destruction and medium-range missiles, is to work for a change of government in Iraq," he said.

"Iraq can play a role, but with Saddam [Hussein] in power this role cannot be constructive," Indyk said.

"That's why we must embark on the mission to change the government in Iraq so that this country can participate in maintaining stability in the face of threats," he said.

In contrast, Washington supported Baghdad during the 1980s when it waged an eight-year war against Iran. "But Indyk's warning of an Iranian threat was seen as part of efforts to win the backing of Gulf Arab states like the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which opposes U.S. military strikes on Iraq and its campaign to topple Saddam Hussein."

The UAE is in dispute with Iran over three islands in the southern Gulf. In 1998, Iran successfully tested Shahab-3, a medium-range missile capable of hitting most countries in the region,

notably the Gulf petromonarchies allied to Washington.

Despite the warning over Tehran, Indyk said "another way to deal with Iran would be to find a means to allow this country to play a constructive role in regional security."

"We would welcome such a development, which requires a change of behaviour on the part of Iran, and we are willing to hold a dialogue with the Iranians to achieve and encourage" such a change, he told Al Hayat. The United States and Iran broke off diplomatic relations in 1980 after a hostage-taking at the U.S. embassy in Tehran. The two countries have exchanged signals since moderate cleric Mohammad Khatami took over as Iran's president in May 1997 elections, but his policies are challenged by Islamic conservative hardliners.

Israel bars Palestinian lawmaker from Jerusalem constituency

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israel decided on Monday to bar a Palestinian lawmaker who represents Arab east Jerusalem Arabs in the Palestinian legislature from entering the city, officials said.

The move against Ziad Abu Ziad, who is also a minister without portfolio in the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), was taken at a special meeting of senior Israeli ministers and security officials, officials privy to the decision told AFP.

The measures were designed to reassert Israeli sovereignty over Arab east Jerusalem, where Palestinians

hope to establish the capital of a future state, officials said.

Last week Israel already withdrew a special VIP travel pass issued under the peace accords to Abu Ziad, who lives in Al Azariya, a West Bank village adjacent to Arab east Jerusalem.

Israel accuses Abu Ziad of acting as an official representative of the PNA in Arab east Jerusalem. It also cancelled the VIP passes of a second east Jerusalem lawmaker, Hanan Ashrawi, and of Faisal Hussein, the top PLO official in the city.

The VIP passes facilitate the movement of Palestinian officials, allowing them to enter

Jerusalem and Israel and to travel freely between the West Bank and Gaza Strip even during security alerts.

Monday's decision went further, banning Abu Ziad from visiting his constituents in east Jerusalem.

Under the Oslo peace accords, the PNA was authorised to administer autonomous areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but not to operate outside those zones.

The accords did, however, permit Palestinians living in east Jerusalem to elect representatives to the Palestinian Legislative Council.

Report: Iraq paid \$800,000 to Russian prime minister

NEW YORK (AP) —

Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov received at least \$800,000 from the Iraqi government and hid it under U.N. efforts to monitor Baghdad's illegal weapons programmes.

The New Yorker magazine reported on Monday.

The magazine, in an article by investigative reporter Seymour M. Hersh, also said the U.S. military attempted to assassinate Iraqi President Saddam Hussein during allied air strikes last December. The story was reported in the magazine's April 5 edition, which hit U.S. newsstands on Monday.

Asked about the report at a news conference, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov called it a "dirty" attempt to divert popular attention from NATO raids on

Yugoslavia. "They believe that all means will do in this dirty game and they are using such unscrupulous methods," he said.

According to the New Yorker, Primakov has a close friendship with Saddam dating back to the 1960s, when the Russian official was a Pravda correspondent in the Middle East.

U.N. weapons inspector Rolf Ekeus learned how close that friendship was in 1996 when he alerted Primakov to evidence that Russia was smuggling illegal contraband to Iraq, including materials for the Iraqi nuclear programme, the New Yorker said.

Primakov, Russia's foreign minister at the time, said his government was not involved in any illegal smuggling, and promised to conduct an investigation, Ekeus is quoted as saying.

Ekeus said he never saw the results of any investigation, and that secret codes used by the Russians were subsequently changed.

Theo, in November 1997, British intelligence found strong evidence of a \$800,000 payment to Primakov by Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, the magazine said.

"A payment was made," it quotes an American source as saying. "This is rock solid."

According to the report, senior CIA officials had believed for a long time that Primakov was receiving payments from Saddam.

In Moscow, Primakov's spokeswoman, Tatyana Aristarkhova, said she could not comment on the New Yorker article because she had not seen it.

The New Yorker also said that the December 1998 bombings of Iraq ordered by President Bill Clinton included an assassination attempt on Saddam by bombing two sites where the Iraqi leader allegedly meets his mistresses. It said the official goal of the attack was to "degrade" Iraq's strategic capabilities.

U.S. officials did not immediately comment on the New Yorker report. But U.S. officials have denied similar assertions in the past.

U.S. policy explicitly prohibits assassinations of foreign leaders.

Sino-U.S. talks draw closer to accord on China's WTO entry

BEIJING (AFP) — Sino-U.S. talks on China's long-standing bid to enter the World Trade Organisation (WTO) reached the final stages on Monday as U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky arrived here to try and clinch a deal.

"We are getting down to the final negotiations. There has been great progress," said U.S. Commerce Secretary William Daley, who kicked off a new four-day mission to prise open China's markets.

He said Barshefsky, who arrived in China for her

second visit this month, would "try to finish up on this."

Negotiations are expected to be wrapped up this week ahead of Premier Zhu Rongji's visit to the United States beginning April 6, Daley said.

"You're not going to be doing this sort of negotiations when he (Zhu) is in the U.S. So there is a very small window of opportunity to get this done or try to identify what sort of final issues and try to move forward over the next number of weeks if by chance they aren't done this week," Daley said.

He said, however, that there were still "serious differences" that needed to be ironed out but "I don't think there is any question that there has been major progress made in the negotiations."

"There are serious differences, and when you get down to the end of negotiations, sometimes there are deal breakers if that happens," he said, adding, however, that should a deal fall through "we move on with strong economic relations."

He said talks were "at a point of seriousness enough to bring her (Barshefsky) back."

Daley mentioned anti-dumping and agriculture as some of the areas of major disagreements.

In his meeting with Zhu earlier Monday, Daley said the Chinese premier voiced concerns that political considerations could hinder an agreement as well as concerns over U.S. flexibility on the talks.

"He (Zhu) expressed the feeling that there is concern as to whether or not a deal was doable based upon other considerations of politics and whether the bar is being raised at this point," he said.

"There is no doubt according to his statements they would like to do a deal, and he believes they have moved greatly over the last number of months in negotiations. But I will say we are all cautiously optimistic that a deal can be done, but as in any good negotiations sometimes the most difficult issues are off to the very end," he said.

Washington has previously opposed China joining the WTO on grounds that Beijing has yet to take sufficient steps to open its markets to foreign goods.

Lauding progress in

China's WTO bid, a Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation assistant minister promised measures to widen access by foreign companies to China's closed markets.

"The two sides have achieved positive progress in China's WTO accession negotiations... which will play an important role in China's ability to attract foreign investment," Ma Xuhong told reporters.

Ma cited prospects of liberalisation in the retail sector and in telecommunications, but gave no details.

The WTO talks appear to be the only bright spot in Sino-U.S. ties strained in the past weeks over allegations that China has stolen nuclear technology and Washington's decision to sponsor a resolution in the United Nations in Geneva condemning alleged Chinese human rights abuses.

"There are two difficulties that are going on... human rights obviously with our action in Geneva and the intelligence gathering allegations that have been made over the last number of weeks," Daley said, adding that there were

"concerns as to exactly where the relationship was going."

Daley is in China to seek further opening of China's markets to American products and services, including U.S. companies' seeking part of Chinese infrastructure projects worth one trillion dollars.

The two sides signed agreements covering cooperation in energy and environmental protection programmes.



Chocaholics to get 1,760-lb Easter egg

PERUGIA (R) — Master chocolate-makers in the central city of Perugia, home to some of Italy's best-loved sweets, said on Friday they had made a 1,760-pound Easter egg. The giant egg will be put on display until the day before Easter Sunday, when it will be broken up and distributed free as a message of peace and solidarity, the organisers said.

Town seeks divine help to pay its bills

IRVINGTON (R) — Faced with a huge budget deficit, the town of Irvington, New Jersey, has decided to seek help from the highest authority. Irvington Mayor Sara Bost organised a gospel-singing vigil Thursday evening to pray for help in dealing with the \$7 million deficit in the town's fiscal 1999 budget. "It's no secret that we're having problems," said the mayor's spokeswoman, Jacqueline Andrews. "The mayor felt there's no better way to respond than to invoke God's leadership, whether it be for financial or other help," she said. State officials are poised to take over supervision of the town's finances, a possible repeat of a 1997 takeover when Irvington's budget was \$17 million in the red.

Men use Internet sex sites more than women

WASHINGTON (AFP) — U.S. men click on Internet sex sites six times more often than women do, says a new study appearing in the journal of the American Psychological Association. A study of 9,000 anonymous Internet users published in Professional Psychology: Research and Practice says that 86 per cent of men call up sites with explicit sexual content compared to 14 per cent of women. The study also says that many more men than women preferred visual erotica, and that more women than men — 49 per cent against 23 per cent — were drawn to Internet discussion sites. The poll was conducted over seven weeks on the MSNBC Television Internet site. Some 78.8 per cent of respondents said they call up sex sites only at home, 5.8 per cent exclusively at work and 12.7 per cent at work and home. Most of the users said they were married (64 per cent) or living with a partner (17 per cent). Among single people, half said they have a regular partner.

Town warns drivers — Get a grip while on phone

BROOKLYN (R) — The Cleveland suburb that pioneered seat belt laws more than 30 years ago has found a new way to force safer driving — make motorists using cellular phones keep both hands on the steering wheel. Brooklyn police chief James Maloney said Thursday his officers have issued two warnings since City Council passed a first-of-its-kind ordinance requiring drivers talking on their cellular phones to keep both hands on the wheel. The misdemeanor offence could result in a fine of \$100, although some leeway was granted for emergency calls. Maloney said. Motorists would normally have to violate more than the cellular phone law to get stopped, he added. The cellular phone ordinance was the idea of Mayor John Coyne, who was also the force behind Brooklyn's ground-breaking seat belt law in 1966.